



NJ GEAR UP STATE PROJECT

**Location: Program Administrative Office
NJ Commission on Higher Education
20 W. State St., 7th Floor
Trenton, NJ**

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL*

***This version is for use by external entities**

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INTRODUCTION

The NJ GEAR UP State Project was funded by the U.S. Department of Education in 1999 and 2005 to carry out early intervention activities and a scholarship component for low-income students, parents, and teachers in Camden, Jersey City, Newark, and Trenton. The Commission on Higher Education (CHE) was selected by the governor's office to be the applying and administering agency. In 2005, Paterson was added.

GEAR UP stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs and is administered at the federal level by the Office of Postsecondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education.

NJ GEAR UP operates using the "priority" vs. "cohort" model, an option that is only given to state grantees. Priority model allows the state to serve fewer than an entire cohort of students, and students may enter the program in any grade as designated in the grant application. Cohort students may enter the program no later than the seventh grade.

Participating higher education institutions

The higher education institutions selected to participate in the program were chosen based on:

- having had success with a state-funded College Bound program (College Bound funds would serve as state matching contributions to GEAR UP);
- having established successful relationships with highly needy (financially and academically) schools; and
- having served or having the capacity to serve students in grades 6-12.

These higher education institutions are:

- Camden: Rowan University (99 and 05), CEEB 251542
- Jersey City: New Jersey City University (99 and 05), CEEB 251642
- Newark: The Consortium for Pre-College Education in Greater Newark (NJIT, UMDNJ, and Rutgers-Newark) (99 and 05), CEEB 251342
- Paterson: Passaic County Community College (05), CEEB 269422
- Trenton: Mercer County Community College (99 and 05), CEEB 244422

Participating state entities

State entities involved in the application for GEAR UP funding are:

- Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA). Key contact is the director of financial aid services
- Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF). Key contact is the executive director of EOF
- New Jersey Department of Education (DOE). For 2005 application, director of the office of professional standards in the division of Abbott implementation. For professional development component, secondary education initiative in the division of Abbott implementation

Campus programs

References to "campus programs" in this manual are defined as the staff employed by the institutions listed above specifically for the implementation of NJ GEAR UP and possibly other grant programs. The director of each of these programs is the primary point of contact with CHE about the grant. Contracts with each institution delineate the responsibilities of the campus program.

Program description

The program was funded to provide low-income students with early intervention activities in the form of Saturday classes, after-school tutoring, summer programs, college field trips, mentoring, advising/counseling, exam prep, career advice, and assistance with applying to college and completing financial aid applications.

Services to parents include parent workshops, information about a college bound curriculum for their children and about financial aid for college, college field trips, volunteer opportunities, and award ceremonies.

Services to teachers include teacher professional development activities such as conferences, workshops, and other initiatives that are aligned with NJ DOE priorities whenever possible.

A large portion of NJ GEAR UP funding is used to provide scholarships to participating students who complete GEAR UP in twelfth grade, graduate from high school, and enroll in a New Jersey college or university. For the 2005 cycle, the qualification was added that students had to participate in the seventh grade; that is, students who enter the program later than seventh grade do not receive the scholarship.

Student eligibility

Students participating in NJ GEAR UP must be low-income, attend a NJ GEAR UP target school in 6th-12th grades upon entry into the program (see Appendix B), and complete a contract and other application materials. "Low-income" for GEAR UP is defined as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Goal of this manual

The goal of this manual is to document NJ GEAR UP policies and procedures to ensure ethical, deadline- and data-driven, team-oriented decision-making by the NJ GEAR UP staff and the members of CHE. The goal is also to provide a guide to the NJ GEAR UP campus programs to emulate for their own sites.

21ST CENTURY SCHOLAR CERTIFICATES

The 21st Century Scholar Certificates are required by statute to be awarded to every participating GEAR UP student. The certificates state that students should be congratulated for the path they have put themselves on; it reminds them that if they study hard and take the right courses, federal aid will be available to them when they get to college. The certificates are signed by the secretary of education.

The blank certificate is provided annually to the Commission by the U.S. Department of Education with a requirement that the project personalize the certificate and award it to students. Each year, the program specialist at US ED asks for the number of certificates we need. Since returning students above 7th grade have received the certificate already, we request the number we need to award the certificates to all new students...these will mostly be sixth and seventh graders. We ask US ED to send the blank certificates directly to HESAA for personalizing, per HESAA's Memo of Understanding with CHE.

The grant contract also indicates that we will give a comparable state certificate to all GEAR UP students. The design of this certificate is on file at HESAA. The state certificate is signed by the executive director of CHE.

In early spring each year, NJ GEAR UP identifies the new students from the programs' most recent databases and exports a list of their names and program identifier into an Excel file. After verifying with the campus programs that these are the correct names, the lists are sent to HESAA. HESAA uses them to personalize the state and federal certificates in batches by program; then they mail the certificates to the programs for awarding at their annual closing ceremonies.

CHE can provide certificate holders to programs upon request. Some campus programs ask the Commission staff who attend the awards ceremony to personally present the certificates to the students.

ADVISORY BOARD

The NJ GEAR UP Advisory Board (NJGAB) was originally convened in 2001. Its goal was to seek guidance on issues of policy, direction, and general improvement of NJ GEAR UP from a wide spectrum of representatives from the education community. Members included representatives from higher education/precollege programs, HESAA, the community, and the K-12 sector. Meetings were held twice a year, once in the north and once in the south, at 8:00 a.m. so members could limit time away from work/school. Agendas and meeting notes were generated and distributed by the Commission staff, who also convened and led the meetings.

Within a few years, it was recommended that K-12 play a greater role on the Board. A general invitation was sent to all target school principals, inviting them to participate or to send a designee. This resulted in greater participation in NJ GEAR UP-related issues by schools and districts.

Paper and electronic files which document the list of members, the Charge to the Board, the agendas, and the meeting notes are kept under headings of "Advisory Board." The last major issue the Advisory Board assisted with was suggestions for rewriting of the NJ GEAR UP proposal for funding, after which meetings were suspended while the funding status was unknown.

As of this writing, NJGAB had not been re-convened.

ALUMNI PROJECT

The Alumni Project, as of June 2008, is still in development. The desire is to have a systematic way to stay in touch with alumni of College Bound and GEAR UP so that we can document their successes during and after college and call on them to testify to the positive impact of the programs on their lives. Currently, the NJ GEAR UP secretarial assistant has devised an implementation plan for searching for and contacting College Bound and NJ GEAR UP alumni and inviting them to a kickoff event in 2009. The event would "kick-off" the new Alumni Network, a web site where we collect info on the alumni, and a new Facebook page.

APR (ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT)

Description

The APR is the annual report submitted to US ED to document NJ GEAR UP's progress on its objectives, expenditures to date and for each reporting period, matching contributions, students' educational progress in core courses, high school graduation rate, college enrollment rate, students'/parents' expectations and knowledge of college and financial aid, and hours of service provided to NJ GEAR UP students, parents, and teachers.

Deadline

The report is currently due on April 15th, though the date can be changed by contract or announcement of the program officer at US ED.

Report period

Unfortunately, the APR is requested mid-year, forcing projects to simultaneously report on the last half of the previous fiscal year and the first half of the current fiscal year (i.e., April 1-March 15). Most charts on students

request info only on those who enrolled in the program as of the previous September 1st (current year), but indicators such as course completion, high school graduation, and college enrollment all refer to the previous year's students. Budget reports require status on each previous budget period as well as current expenditures. In addition, the report demonstrating progress on objectives has typically attempted to indicate whether each objective was met as of the end of the previous grant year (April-Aug.) and whether it has been met thus far in the current year (Sept. 1-March 15).

Report submission

The report is submitted electronically via a site that is opened each year by US ED and which is accessed using the project's PR# and a password. Some documents, such as the narrative of the program's progress on its objectives, are composed in Word, uploaded to the website, and submitted along with the completed charts on the website. The US ED program specialist alerts the project director each year when the website is open and what the initial password is.

Major components

Executive summary: This is most easily written once the other sections are written, so there is clear understanding of what has been achieved since the last APR.

Narrative questions: These are general questions about a variety of issues, such as where the project has the greatest impact and what barriers it has encountered.

Narrative budget questions: These are general questions about the state of the budget, personnel, and other aspects of grant administration.

Progress on objectives: This section requires the state office to collect data on the progress on each objective from the five campus sites, HESAA, and EOF; then it must aggregate all that data into one indicator of progress. Then, NJ GEAR UP staff must indicate if the target has not been met, whether it will be met by the end of the year, whether it will not be met and why, and whether it needs to be revised.

Charts of educational progress: These are automated APR forms that collect the numbers of NJ GEAR UP students enrolled by grade in particular math and science courses. This data is collected from the NJ GEAR UP databases from the campus programs, aggregated by the data assistant, and reported.

Hours of service: The number of hours that students, parents, and teachers participate in particular types of activities is counted using Excel spreadsheets submitted by the campus programs and by HESAA.

Surveys: Surveys of students and parents must be administered at least every two years. These surveys are available on the NJ GEAR UP website in Spanish and English for campus programs to copy, administer, and submit to the Commission at least twice annually at report time. Surveys are created using Word, and then a template of the Word document is created in Remark Survey Software, which allows the results to easily be scanned from paper surveys and tabulated. The US ED currently requires an 80% response rate on student surveys and 50% on parent surveys.

Budget: The APR requires reporting of current federal and non-federal expenditures (since Sept. 1) and of federal and non-federal expenditures for all previous budget periods. Sources of information to complete these sections are outlined in Appendix I.

Time to complete: With current procedures, the APR takes three employees approximately one month to complete once all data are in hand (3 x 20 days x 7 hrs/day = 420 hours).

Signature: The executive director of CHE signs the APR in addition to the director of NJ GEAR UP. Signed original cover page is sent by overnight mail to US ED following electronic submission of the APR.

Files: Electronic files of the APR are kept on the GEAR UP back-up drive. Paper files of the APR should include:

- 5 file copies of the APR
- “Data” folder including all paper notes on calculations of any indicators
- “Budget” folder including all notes on the budget
- “EOF” folder including stats on EOF participation
- A “working copy” of each campus program’s APR

AWARD NUMBERS AND OTHER INFORMATION

- Current (2005) Grant Award # (PR#): P334S050027
- Previous Grant Award # (PR#): P334A990576
- Code of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA): 84.334S
- U.S. Department of Education Website for GEAR UP: www.ed.gov/gearup

AWARD YEAR

NJ GEAR UP is a federal grant and operates on a federal program year, which is Sept. 1 – Aug. 31. Unlike the New Jersey fiscal year which is identified by the year in which it ends [e.g., FY 2007 begins in 2006 and ends in 2007], the federal program year is identified by the year in which it begins [e.g., FPY 2007 begins in 2007 and ends in 2008]. For this reason, the federal program year is always one year behind the state fiscal year. This is a semantics issue only. In June 2007, for example, the project was operating in both state fiscal year 2007 and federal program year 2006.

The federal *program* year is different from both the federal *budget* year (10/1-9/30) and the state/institutional *fiscal* year in New Jersey (7/1-6/30). The importance of knowing and understanding the award year for NJ GEAR UP is primarily related to budgeting, contracts, correspondence with US ED, and information related to federal funding and new competitions. For a sample of an 18-month calendar indicating award years, see the Appendix.

NJ GEAR UP is a six-year grant dependent upon federal appropriations and approval of annual reports of progress on objectives. Grant years include 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11. These are calendar years that begin in September and end in August.

BIENNIAL EVALUATION

A biennial evaluation of each GEAR UP project is a statutory requirement that was not enforced by US ED until 2007. In 2000, US ED said that the APR would substitute for the biennial requirement. In 2004, CHE completed its own evaluation and submitted it (Dr. Margaret Heisel of the Office of the President of the University of California completed it).

In February 2007, state grantees were told that 2005 awardees would be given until December 2007 to submit their first biennial evaluation report. No guidelines were stipulated regarding content or format, but the time period is the first two years of the grant (9/1/05-8/31/07). Dr. Margaret Heisel was contracted to do a follow-up evaluation on certain aspects of the project. This report was submitted to US ED on 12/31/07. Both completed evaluations are available on the GEAR UP website.

At this time, it would appear that future evaluations will be due on December 1st of 2009 and 2011.

BUDGET (INCLUDING MATCHING FUNDS)

NJ GEAR UP's annual budget is that which was approved in the grant proposal application. This document guides the work of all educators involved in the grant implementation, including the NJ GEAR UP campus program directors. The Commission fiscal office has a copy of the grant proposal with the budget narrative and uses it to set up each year's budget lines.

Federal and matching funds

The NJ GEAR UP budget is comprised of \$3.49 million per year in federal dollars and at least that much in "matching" funds. NJ GEAR UP requires a dollar-for-dollar match of private, state, and/or other non-federal dollars for every federal dollar awarded to the project. Requirements for matching contributions are described on the federal GEAR UP website, in regulations, and in annual information provided by US ED at GEAR UP conferences.

Sources of match

Sources of match—and the annual source of info for each—for NJ GEAR UP are as follows:

- College Bound awards made to GEAR UP campus programs (from program final reports). If the program is contracted to serve a College Bound-only population (for example, students who attend non-GEAR UP target schools or who live in a non-GEAR UP city), the percentage of College Bound funding that is used as match is the same as the percentage of the total students served that is GEAR UP. For an example, see Appendix I.
- Institutional contributions made to GEAR UP campus programs (from program final reports)
- Tuition Assistance Grants (TAG), Garden State Scholars Grants (GSS), and Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) grants made to GEAR UP students in college in NJ (from HESAA)
- EOF grants made to GEAR UP students during EOF summer programs (from HESAA)
- EOF funding provided to institutions that support GEAR UP students (annual estimate)
- Institutional and private financial aid (non-federal) provided to GEAR UP students in college in NJ (annual mailing to institutions)
- Salary, benefit, and other contributions to the grant made by CHE (time/effort sheets and documentation in State Match II spreadsheet)
- In-kind contributions from target schools (from program final reports)
- Cash and in-kind contributions from campus partner organizations (e.g., Campbell's, from program final reports)
- Cash and in-kind contributions from statewide partner organizations (Kellogg grant, from State Chamber)
- External grants earned for benefit of GEAR UP students (AT&T)

Documentation in spreadsheets

NJ GEAR UP staff at CHE have developed several spreadsheets to handle the following types of budgetary documentation required for the project:

- The state's budget for the project, including for each institution
- Modifications to the state's or any institution's budget
- The budget from the grant proposal, including original documentation
- Individual institution budget modification files
- All GEAR UP transactions by year and category, and demonstrating when funds were drawn
- All CHE matching contributions
- Documentation of expenditures as reported in the APR.

Draw-down schedule

This manual establishes a schedule of quarterly draws, as follows:

- October 1 (*following execution of GU contracts & initial payments to institutions, as well as scholarship funding that has been put into trust*)
- January 1
- April 1
- July 1

The GEAR UP staff use draw-down events to examine budget expenditures with the manager of budget and administration and reconcile any issues; determine if there are remaining funds in the CHE budget that need to be spent; and identify any potential challenges. The state coordinator contributes to all budget and draw-down meetings. These analyses are also done as needed.

Campus program budgets (including College Bound and institutional funds)

Every NJ GEAR UP campus program has a College Bound budget and an institutional budget as well as a GEAR UP budget. College Bound funding comes from an annual state appropriation and is allocated to campuses every five years through an RFP process. For non-GEAR UP programs, this is a competitive process, but at this writing, because College Bound (state) funds are essential to meeting the GEAR UP match, GEAR UP programs have been guaranteed to receive some College Bound funding during an RFP.

During the RFP process, the program details how it will allocate its College Bound funding into budget lines. Each year this information is updated when the program requests continuation of its College Bound funding. GEAR UP staff at the Commission then transfer this information into the GEAR UP contract.

There is a similar process for institutional and other funding. CB/GU programs are expected to contribute funds from their institutions, both direct and indirect, to demonstrate the institutions' support for the program. This support is detailed in the program's RFP and annually in its request for continuation of College Bound funding. It is also added to the GEAR UP budget spreadsheet and included in the annual contract.

Cost principles

NJ GEAR UP follows the guidelines in EDGAR (Education Department General Administrative Regulations) for determining cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness, as well as cost principles outlined in these OMB circulars:

- A-21, Educational Institutions
- A-87, State and Local Governments
- A-122, Non-Profit Organizations

In addition, the NJ GEAR UP State Project expenditures are subjected to general accounting standards, general practice of the State of New Jersey and the Commission on Higher Education, and the project's grant proposal.

The campus program contracts indicate that those institutions also must abide by EDGAR, OMB circulars, and the general accounting principles at the institutions.

Items of cost

The NJ GEAR UP State Project grant proposal was approved to provide early intervention services to low-income students and their parents; scholarships to students; and professional development to teachers.

At the campus level, the proposal spells out the funding that will be spent on services to students and parents.

At CHE, the grant project will expend funds on the following activities to achieve the objectives according to the grant proposal. This is not an inclusive list, but expenditures that vary widely from the cost items on this list should receive approval from the US ED program specialist:

- Salary and benefits of employees
- Some hardware/software for employees to use at work
- Travel to federally funded and mandated professional development conferences
- In-state travel for campus visits
- Contractual payments to HESAA for services outlined in Memo of Understanding
- Contractual payments to five institutions according to annual contracts
- State background checks for mentors hired at the institutions
- Publicity, including printing of brochures, copies, posters, notebooks, event programs; contracting for graphic design services; advertising for mentors in campus newspapers
- Classified advertisements to fill GEAR UP positions at CHE
- Teacher professional development, including hiring workshop presenters or consultants; conference room space for workshops; teacher stipends; consultant travel
- Statewide events to honor students, parents, and/or teachers, including space, food, presenters, materials
- Food at annual meetings with campus directors and other partners to evaluate progress
- Scholarships
- Professional memberships and resources
- Program evaluation.

Checks and balances

NJ GEAR UP staff follow state guidelines for purchases, including getting bids at the appropriate dollar level. Some contracts, particularly for teacher professional development, are awarded to consultants because they are the sole providers of that service. For example, the NJ DOE has worked previously with a team of three providers to provide sustained, ongoing math development to Abbott district teachers. When it aligned NJ GEAR UP teacher PD objectives with those of NJ DOE, NJ GEAR UP continued to contract with that same team for similar math sessions with NJ GEAR UP schools/teachers.

The NJ GEAR UP director signs off on all purchases and payments. The purchase/payment is then reviewed/approved by the manager of budget and administration, the director of finance and research, and in some cases, such as contracts, by the executive director of the Commission.

Unspent funds/carryover

According to EDGAR, projects have one year from the end of the award year to expend all funds. When there are unspent funds in a GEAR UP year, these funds are carried over (with program officer notification) into the next year and expended prior to the current year's funds. Typically these funds are used for activities that were not specifically budgeted for in the grant proposal but which are within the grant's scope, such as statewide conferences for teachers, students, or parents; printing of brochures and posters for campus programs; mentoring events, and the like.

Funds carried forward may also be awarded to NJ GEAR UP campus programs for "Activity Grants," i.e., special activities that are within the scope of the grant but that could not be accomplished with available funds. Activity grants are implemented using a cover page, letter, and budget summary form sent to the president and

the director, and programs are informed in advance how much money is available. A final report of expenditures and outcomes is required.

Activity grants cannot be treated as part of the program's current contract budget because they originated in the previous year.

COLLEGE BOUND

This information relates only to the New Jersey GEAR UP State Project.

COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

This information relates only to the New Jersey GEAR UP State Project.

CONTRACTS/PAYMENTS

This information relates only to the New Jersey GEAR UP State Project.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH U.S. ED

Program specialist

James Davis, GEAR UP Team Leader, is the program specialist who oversees the NJ GEAR UP State Project at the U.S. Department of Education.

The NJ GEAR UP director is responsible for all communication with US ED. The NJ GEAR UP director generally discusses all policy questions with the director of academic affairs before requesting a written response from the US ED.

Contact information:

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Grant Award Notification (GAN)

The Grant Award Notification is the document provided by US ED at the beginning of a grant and each subsequent year to verify that funding will be provided for the next award period. This document is mailed to significant personnel on file for the grant in August of each year. It is awarded when it is determined that the APR submitted in April is acceptable to US ED. A copy of it is included with campus programs' GEAR UP contracts and shared with HESAA when received. Until this document is received, CHE cannot set up the next year's budget lines.

DATABASE

The NJ GEAR UP State Project and College Bound use the GIST (GEAR UP Individual Student Tracking System) to track individual student academic progress and outcomes. The GIST is a PC-based, student unit record enrollment system in Microsoft Access software. It contains data elements in five major components for

each student (demographics, academic background and performance, program participation, individual counseling/mentoring, and specific information relative to high school seniors, e.g., college application process, financial aid, and college acceptance).

The higher education institutions that provide services to GEAR UP and College Bound students have been provided with their own copies of the GIST and trained on its use. At each campus site, program personnel are responsible to enter data pertaining to students served at their site. The NJ GEAR UP data assistant regularly updates and enhances the GIST, then follows up with training for campus personnel on the changes. When internal or external reports are required, password-protected individual databases are emailed to the Commission and aggregated by the data assistant to reflect the state's outcomes.

Program personnel at the college campuses collect demographic information for the GIST from the student contract (completed when a participant enrolls in the program) and academic background information from the most recent school report card. Participants are required to supply quarterly report cards to program staff; guidance counselors at the target schools help program staff meet this requirement when students fail to comply. Data for performance on New Jersey barrier exams (the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment, or GEPA, and High School Proficiency Assessment, or HSPA) is provided by guidance counselors to GEAR UP program staff, by the students, or by school districts, adhering to FERPA guidelines. Students in grades 10-12 are required to provide PSAT and SAT score reports to program staff for data entry into the GIST. A paper file for each participant's documents is maintained at the program sites.

The database is the first source of information when the program seeks to analyze annual outcomes for College Bound/GEAR UP (see "College Bound flier"). Students who are marked as active seniors in the database are analyzed for their rates of success on such indicators as taking the SAT, scores on the SAT, graduation from high school, and enrollment in college within six months.

A primary tool for analyzing GEAR UP student enrollment in and progress through higher education is New Jersey's SURE system, a state-maintained database developed in 1985 and containing over six million records on students enrolled at New Jersey colleges and universities.

DIRECTORS

The primary point of contact for each campus program with CHE is the program director. This person is named in the GEAR UP application and the contract with the college and is required to submit all program reports and data to CHE. He or she is also responsible for that site's fulfillment of the College Bound and GEAR UP fiscal and programmatic objectives. CHE must be notified if there is any change in the time contribution of this important staff member. Directors are identified in the Appendix.

The NJ GEAR UP directors meet five times per year to get updates from CHE; provide information about their current activities and goals; and brainstorm solutions to challenges. Meetings are rotated through the five campuses; an agenda is provided and notes are distributed following each meeting. Agendas are set by the director and state coordinator. Campus directors can add items to the agenda at any time.

EVENTS

NJ GEAR UP has implemented a variety of events to enhance grant objectives: the 21st Century Scholar Ceremony in 2000 and 2001 to celebrate student accomplishments; events primarily for staff, partnerships, teachers and counselors to receive professional development in 2001-2004; a parent event (Family Matters); annual retreats or meetings designed for evaluation of each individual program; kickoff ceremonies; events that foster relationships between mentors and their protégés; and student-centered celebratory events such as Passing

the Torch in December 2007. Student events typically also include some professional development for the adults who attend.

Each of these events is undertaken to meet specific grant goals on a larger, statewide scale, for example:

- Awarding of scholar certificates (statutory requirement)
- Staff and teacher development
- Professional development and networking to partnership grants
- Services to parents
- Evaluation of program progress
- Celebration of student accomplishments (for parents and students)
- Mentoring services

Events are typically implemented by the state coordinator, working with the director and the program staff.

MENTORING

Mentoring has been an integral part of the NJ GEAR UP grant since its inception. Because it was one service which was not already being provided by the campus programs in some form, development of the mentoring component has always been the responsibility of the state coordinator as a special form of assistance to the campus programs.

In the original model, NJ GEAR UP mentors were always defined as:

- College students
- Paid staff
- Primary role was to emulate a successful college-going experience

In 2008, the requirement that a mentor be a current college student was eliminated.

Group mentoring was used primarily because of a concern about liability with such young children spending time alone with adults. It was also determined to be nearly impossible to afford or manage a 1:1 ratio of students and mentors.

The state coordinator assists programs with recruiting mentors according to their needs, using Facebook advertisements, ads in campus newspapers, a mentor brochure, and other means. The mentor application can be found on the GEAR UP website, and mentors can submit applications online. When CHE receives applications, it forwards them to the appropriate program director.

Mentors are screened using an extensive application and a NJ State Police background check. The background check is performed by the individual completing the “blue form” (the SB212) provided by the state police and submitting it to CHE, which submits and pays for the review and informs the program of the results. The state background check does not involve fingerprints and only reveals if a person has a criminal record in the state. If there is a record, program directors are told the information and allowed to make their own subsequent hiring decision. The background check form is then destroyed.

Mentors were initially trained by the state coordinator, who would travel to the program sites. However, often attendance was low, and new mentors would miss the training. The model was changed to annual statewide training designed and implemented by the Commission each year during the summer program prep time at the campuses. Typically, trainers were brought in from state or community agencies (for informational workshops) or from companies that specialize in team-building (to help give mentors ideas for working with their students).

In 2008, the decision was made to utilize campus directors and their staff to train mentors on “the role of a GEAR UP mentor” and other topics, with outside professionals brought in for two workshops.

NJ GEAR UP has created a Mentor Manual that outlines the program requirements, policies, and procedures. It contains forms used for documentation of activities as well as extensive resources.

Each NJ GEAR UP campus site has a staff member whose responsibility it is to oversee mentoring and provide the needed data to the program director for submission to CHE.

OFFICE/PERSONNEL PROCEDURES, INCLUDING ETHICS

Expectations of NJ state employees/Intranet

Office/personnel procedures governing NJ GEAR UP/College Bound employees are identical to those that govern other employees of the State of New Jersey and of the Commission on Higher Education. CHE policies/forms and many state forms can be found on the CHE Intranet. Employees are required to submit to state/Commission regulations, including the filing of appropriate paperwork, in all areas, including but not limited to:

- Documenting of sick, vacation, and other time outside of work
- Ethics training
- Expectations of professional behavior
- Performance review
- Enrollment in pension, health, and other state plans
- Reimbursement of travel and other expenses
- Parking assignments
- Designation of “essential personnel” when needed
- General staff meetings
- Commission on Higher Education meetings
- Assignments to work with other departments

Time and effort

NJ GEAR UP employees must complete and sign monthly time and effort sheets which are collected and filed by the NJ GEAR UP secretarial assistant. Campus program directors have been told that their sites should also have time/effort systems in place. For a sample time/effort sheet, see the Appendix.

Staff organization

The NJ GEAR UP director supervises the NJ GEAR UP state coordinator, data assistant, and secretarial assistant. She is in turn supervised by the director of academic affairs, who reports to the executive director.

The director, data assistant, and secretarial assistant have a portion of their salaries paid by CHE. The state coordinator spends 100% of his time on NJ GEAR UP, as required by the grant. For specific responsibilities of each staff member, refer to the Appendix.

NJ GEAR UP staff at the Commission meet formally approximately 10 times per year to set priorities and seek ways to enhance the overall project. A monthly calendar and tasks list are employed to identify staff tasks, emphasize deadlines, and coordinate projects. Employees at the Commission are responsible for their own secretarial work, including email, mailings, faxing, and filing. The secretarial assistant helps with these duties to a large extent but also has her own project assignments. As needed, secretarial projects such as mailings, UPS

packages, copying, etc. can be delegated to the CHE secretary/interns by putting the job in “the basket” on the central office filing cabinets.

Supply ordering

Ordering of office supplies and equipment is completed by non-GEAR UP staff at the Commission. Special supply orders should be directed to the CHE program analyst. Every effort should be made to avoid emergency ordering or late charges.

Computer and file security

Employees should use adequate backup procedures for their computers. Currently, each computer has been equipped with a program that will automatically back up any changed files to a common drive each time the computer is booted up. Issues with this can be directed to the finance/research unit.

Student files [e.g., for the scholarship component] are secured by being kept in locked cabinets and/or locked offices.

Performance Assessment Review (PAR)

Performance Assessment Review/PAR, is conducted twice per year. The employee review year is identical to the fiscal year: July 1–June 30. The interim PAR takes place in January and covers the six-month period from July 1– Dec. 31; the final PAR takes place in July and covers the final six-month period of Jan. 1–June 30.

Employees are also asked to review the updated PAR instrument provided to them by their supervisor each year and sign it to indicate that they are aware of the revised PAR elements for the new fiscal year. Employees are asked to submit a short list of primary accomplishments to the NJ GEAR UP director prior to each PAR review. They are also asked to share their feedback about their assessment at a face-to-face meeting.

Copies of the completed PAR are provided to the employee, the supervisor, and the state human resources office. The original is kept in secure CHE files maintained by the CHE secretary.

PUBLICITY/WEBSITE

Efforts to publicize the program are conducted by the NJ GEAR UP director (for the entire project) and the campus directors (for local efforts).

For student events, press releases are sent to the primary newspaper in each city.

For documentation of the programs’ effectiveness, the College Bound flier is produced annually and distributed to the programs.

The NJ GEAR UP website is designed and maintained by the NJ GEAR UP data assistant. Its URL is www.nj.gov/highereducation/gearup.htm. Essential information for directors, students, parents, teachers, and the public are maintained on the site.

Campus programs often invite local legislators to speak at or attend student or parent events to raise awareness of the programs, or to visit the summer program.

NJ GEAR UP publishes a statewide brochure about the program and distributes it to the campus programs and other outlets.

Annual meetings with school districts also serve to raise awareness about the program in the local communities. At these meetings, key stakeholders are reminded about the success the program is having and are asked to strategize ways to enhance the program in that city. Program accomplishments unique to that city are also shared among attendees.

RECORD/EQUIPMENT RETENTION

Records

Records must be kept for the life of the grant and for three years after the date of the final expenditure report. Refer to EDGAR at §74.53 (IHEs) and §80.42 (State and local governments).

At CHE, state retention guidelines will be followed (seven years). All records and equipment from the initial grant will be retained until the end of the current grant cycle.

Equipment

For the use/disposal of equipment at the end of the grant cycle, campus programs should refer to the guidance in EDGAR at §74.34 (for IHEs and non-profit organizations) and §80.32 (for State and local governments). Additional information was provided by the US ED program specialist in an email on 8/22/05:

“In response to several questions posed during the closeout session, we are provided additional information below on the disposition of equipment. Given the fact that there are distinctly different provisions for institutions of higher education (IHEs) and State and local governments, we have responded to your questions in general terms. Extensive guidance for this topic is provided in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), at §74.34(g) (for IHEs and non-profit organizations) and §80.32(e) (for State and local governments).

Definition: Equipment means an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the organization for financial statement purposes, or \$5000.

1a) When a grant expires what is required relative to equipment? For instance, if an IHE purchased equipment for the students to use at school, should the institution transfer ownership to the school district/school when the grant ends? b) Should grantees use fair market value or depreciation when determining the value of equipment?

The U.S. Department of Education’s (ED) equipment disposition regulations apply if the equipment has a current per unit fair market value of \$5,000 or more. Once the grant project expires, institutions may transfer ownership to another federally-sponsored program that is still in operation or retain the equipment and use it for another purpose. Using the aforementioned example, the IHE should relinquish ownership to the school since it is likely to have other federal programs in operation; moreover, the equipment can continue to benefit students. If the institution elects to retain equipment and use it for another purpose, the institution must remit payment to ED, which is

calculated by applying the percentage of federal participation in the cost of the original project to the current fair market value of the equipment.

2. Which law, federal or state, takes precedence when it comes to equipment disposition? For instance, if an institution defines equipment as being any item that costs \$200.00 or more per unit cost, should the institution have to adhere to federal equipment regulations?

While ED regulations address equipment having a current per unit fair market value of \$5,000 or more, institutions may define or categorize equipment differently, i.e., based on usage, type or a lesser dollar amount. If the current per unit fair market value is less than \$5,000, grantees must adhere to equipment disposition procedures established by the institution.

Please be sure to contact your program officer if there is any uncertainty about closeout procedures.”

RELEASE FORMS

This information relates only to the New Jersey GEAR UP State Project.

REPORT REVIEW/SUMMARY

This information relates only to the New Jersey GEAR UP State Project.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Funding and policies

Approximately \$4 million in scholarship funding has been budgeted for eligible students who enroll in associate or bachelor’s degree programs in New Jersey colleges. The scholarship was first distributed in 2000. In the second cycle of the GEAR UP grant, active seniors who were active in or before 2005 are eligible for the scholarship. After 2011, active seniors who were active in 7th grade will be eligible.

Funds are placed in trust in an NJBEST 529 savings account managed by Franklin Templeton through a subcontractor that manages check disbursement on behalf of students. Franklin Templeton will take over all processes in fall 2008.

Current GEAR UP legislation requires that the scholarship amount is at least the maximum Pell Grant for the academic year or 75% of the cost of attendance at a four-year public college or university, whichever is less; NJ GEAR UP chose the less expensive option—the maximum Pell Grant. Students who enroll in a four-year degree program are eligible for eight semesters of funding. Students who enroll in a two-year degree program are eligible for four semesters of funding. Currently, there is no restriction on the amount of time that a student can take to reach their semester limit. However, they must apply for the scholarship and enroll in college no later than the second fall semester following high school graduation. Students who enroll in an out-of-state institution forfeit future eligibility for the GEAR UP scholarship.

Scholarship manual

The NJ GEAR UP data assistant oversees management of the scholarship component with guidance from the director. She has created two manuals to document procedures. The GEAR UP scholarship manual is used as a

reference for financial aid contacts at the institutions who handle or oversee scholarship awards. The internal procedures manual explains the process required to manage the scholarship at CHE and descriptions of essential queries, reports, and forms in the scholarship database.

Scholarship database

The data assistant also maintains the NJ GEAR UP scholarship database, which is used to store data needed to process and manage payments to and from institutions on behalf of students. It also includes a table that stores degrees earned by NJ GEAR UP scholarship students.

Scholarship paper files/transcript requests

Paper files are maintained on each NJ GEAR UP student who was eligible for the scholarship at one time. These files are secured in a locked office.

In 2008, NJ GEAR UP instituted a policy that new students applying for a scholarship (incoming freshmen) submit a completed “high school transcript request form” with their scholarship application. CHE will submit these requests to the appropriate high schools following the close of school each year. The purpose is to retrieve final grades and courses on 12th-grade students for inclusion in the APR. Files will be kept secure in locked cabinets and/or office.

STATEWIDE COLLABORATIONS/SUSTAINABILITY/PARTNERS

It is essential that NJ GEAR UP work to sustain the most successful components of its project beyond the federal funding period. It is not known at this time if state grantees will be eligible for a third cycle of funding; if they will be able to continue in the same cities or schools; or the amounts for which they will be eligible. To prepare for some kind of continued operation beyond 2011 and to expand the impact of NJ GEAR UP as much as possible, the project identifies and works with external partners. As of June 2008, these partners have included:

- AT&T
- State Chamber of Commerce’s Learn/Do/Earn project, funded by Kellogg
- CitiFoundation
- Governor’s Office of Volunteerism
- DYFS (for foster youth)
- Camden and Trenton Public Schools (for city-wide college fairs)
- Paterson Public Schools (for pilot test of Pre-Algebra initiative)
- Prudential, Wachovia, Horizon Health (via NJIT campus)
- Campbell’s (via Rowan campus)

Through the executive director’s position senior policy advisor on higher education to the Governor, more opportunities for NJ GEAR UP to increase its reach and impact will be realized.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Because GEAR UP’s primary goal is to reform the school environment, not just individual students, successful grants include a component designed to provide professional development to teachers in target schools. NJ GEAR UP staff at CHE have directed many of the professional development efforts for the campus programs, taking a statewide approach. Challenges in offering PD to teachers include:

- Timing (weekdays and Saturdays each offer their own challenges)
- Sustainability (single workshops have limited impact)

In the first cycle, the mode of delivery was primarily conferences, which did not attract enough teachers. A new model was developed, offering to arrange speakers to come to individual schools and offer PD on days and topics of their choosing. Although highly labor intensive, this approach was successful in that it reached many more teachers in GEAR UP schools.

In the second grant cycle, the program budgeted more extensively for PD and has worked with NJ DOE to align math PD strategies with those of the state's Secondary Education Initiative (SEI). The primary mode of delivery has been a consultant-led team of math experts offering intensive, sustained PD on using the graphing calculator to prepare students in middle school for higher-level math courses in high school. NJ DOE's contribution to the funding of this initiative is the cost of one of the consultants' contracts.

As of June 2008, NJ DOE is preparing to transition as the state begins High School Redesign to require more rigorous courses of students. NJ GEAR UP will continue its work with the math consultant team for at least one more year; it is hoped that SEI will continue paying for the one consultant during that same period.

The former NJ GEAR UP state coordinator has been hired to work on the project as a consultant to manage the development, implementation, and evaluation of the professional development component, with direction from NJ GEAR UP staff.

TRAVEL

Federally funded travel for CHE employees who work for NJ GEAR UP includes local travel to meetings, events, site visits, and the like, as well as travel to two US ED-sponsored conferences per year. These conferences are hosted by NCCEP and are required by the grant: teams of grantees are expected to come, and the director is required to attend a special meeting with the program specialist. It is difficult for NJ GEAR UP programs to attend the summer conferences due to the heavy workload of running the six-week summer program, so they are encouraged to attend the February "capacity-building" conference and to attend the summer conference for at least one day when it is held in Washington DC (every other year).

Travel expenses at CHE are reimbursed according to the travel policies for the State of New Jersey and for the Commission. Current mileage reimbursement is \$.31; tolls and parking charges must include a receipt to be reimbursed. Daily commute mileage is not reimbursable and must be subtracted from mileage totals. Individuals who travel frequently may request an American Express Corporate Travel Card. This card can only be used for allowable travel expenses. Tickets for flights and rail must be purchased centrally by CHE per the state contract.

Out-of-state travel, even that which is federally funded, must be approved by the executive director and the Governor's office. Submit these requests well in advance of the event. Travel for events beyond the scope of one's normal business duties must be reviewed by the office Ethics Liaison.

Travel forms are on the CHE Intranet.

APPENDIX A: NJ GEAR UP CAMPUS PROGRAMS 2005-2011

Program	Contact Information
Camden	
<p>C.H.A.M.P./GEAR UP Rowan University 200 N. Broadway Camden, NJ 08102</p>	<p>Dr. Eric Clark, Assistant to the President Ms. Winona Wigfall, Coordinator (856) 756-5420 phone (856) 756-5430 fax clarke@rowan.edu wigfall@rowan.edu</p>
Jersey City	
<p>College Bound/GEAR UP New Jersey City University 2039 Kennedy Blvd. Jersey City, NJ 07305</p>	<p>Ms. Valerie Boseman, Director, Precollege Programs (201) 200-2347 phone (201) 200-2348 fax vboseman@njcu.edu</p>
Newark	
<p>Consortium for Pre-College Education in Greater Newark/GEAR UP New Jersey Institute of Technology 218 Central Ave., Suite 3200 Newark, NJ 07102</p>	<p>Dr. Jesse G. Jackson, Executive Director (973) 596-5762 phone (973) 642-4195 fax Jacksonj@admin.njit.edu</p>
Paterson	
<p>College Bound SMT/GEAR UP Passaic County Community College One College Blvd. Paterson, NJ 07505</p>	<p>Mr. Clarence Wright, Director (973) 684-5201 phone (973) 279-9327 fax cwright@pccc.edu</p>
Trenton	
<p>Project S.M.I.L.E./GEAR UP Mercer County Community College P.O. Box B Trenton, NJ 08690</p>	<p>Mr. Wayne Murray, Director (609) 570-3156 phone (609) 570-3107 fax murrayw@mccc.edu</p>

APPENDIX B: NJ GEAR UP TARGET SCHOOLS 2005-2011

17 Middle Schools	11 High Schools
Camden	Camden
Coopers Poynt ES R.T. Cream ES East Camden MS	Brimm Medical Arts HS Camden HS Creative & Performance Arts HS Woodrow Wilson HS
Jersey City	Jersey City
PS #24 ES PS #38 ES PS #40 ES PS #41 ES	Henry Snyder HS Lincoln HS
Newark	Newark
Hawkins Street ES Ridge Street ES William H. Brown ES	Barringer HS East Side HS
Paterson	Paterson
PS #2 ES PS #6 ES PS #10 ES	East Side HS J. F. Kennedy HS
Trenton	Trenton
Luis Munoz-Rivera ES Grace Dunn MS Hedgepeth-Williams MS Joyce Kilmer ES	Trenton Central HS, including West and North campuses

APPENDIX C: LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS, EDGAR

The GEAR UP legislation, regulations, and guidance can be found at the federal GEAR UP website, at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/gearup/legislation.html>. This website also identifies appropriate EDGAR references important to GEAR UP implementation.

Full text of EDGAR (Education Department General Administrative Regulations) can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/fund/reg/edgarReg/edgar.html>. Printed copies of EDGAR can be found in the director's and state coordinator's offices. However, the online version is assumed to be the most recent.

The US ED website for the GEAR UP project is <http://www.ed.gov/gearup>.

APPENDIX D: NJ GEAR UP PROPOSAL

All staff working on NJ GEAR UP are expected to know the contents of and have available to them the NJ GEAR UP proposal, including budget. Printed copies of the NJ GEAR UP proposal are held by each CHE GEAR UP staff member; other CHE staff members with responsibilities regarding NJ GEAR UP (such as EOF director, College Bound director, research/finance director, manager of finance and administration, executive director); and all campus program directors and partners.

APPENDIX E: GEAR UP STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Secretarial Assistant

Responsible for answering the main NJ GEAR UP State Project phone line. Also responsible for providing general secretarial support to GEAR UP team, release form tracking, event RSVPs, special projects (*as needed*), and all other aspects of GEAR UP office management. Also acts as the Commission Ethics Liaison Officer (ELO) and supports CHE efforts as defined in the PAR.

State Coordinator

Responsible for overseeing day-to-day GEAR UP program(s) operations. Handles budgets, budget modifications, contracts, reporting, permissions to modify proposals, mentoring, and all other duties related to keeping the programs running smoothly.

Data Assistant

Responsible for overall database management, the CB flier, scholarships, all issues relating to data analysis, and the GEAR UP website. All data related and scholarship questions should first be directed to the GEAR UP data assistant. Also supports CHE projects as needed.

NJ GEAR UP Director

Principal U.S. Department of Education contact. Provides leadership, oversight and direction to the NJ GEAR UP State project. Primarily responsible for overall project management, focusing on policy, state-wide collaborations, and new partnerships. Also senior staff to the executive director of the Commission.

College Bound Director

Handles all issues related to College Bound on the State level, i.e., not related to your specific grant program, and may be able to assist you in the absence of GEAR UP staff. Also oversees the Special Needs and ELMS grants as well as CHE purchasing.

APPENDIX F: TIME AND EFFORT DOCUMENT

**APPENDIX G: BUDGET MODIFICATION PROCEDURES FOR GU PROGRAMS—
INTERNAL USE**

APPENDIX H: CONTRACT PROCEDURES FOR GU PROGRAMS—INTERNAL USE

APPENDIX I: DOCUMENTATION OF EXPENDITURES AND MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS—INTERNAL USE

APPENDIX J: FILE LOCATIONS—INTERNAL USE

APPENDIX K: 18-MONTH CB-GU CALENDAR—INTERNAL USE