

College-Going Culture Assessment

Score each statement:

We are already doing this: **3**

We could do this easily or with a little effort: **2**

This would require a major change or a lot of time: **1**

Visibility

- _____ College pennants, banners, and posters are visible in most classrooms, halls, and common areas.
- _____ Messaging relaying the importance of pursuing postsecondary education is visible throughout the school or through communications channels (school announcements, websites, etc.)
- _____ Teachers include visual cues to encourage discussions about their college experience with their students. Examples include posting information about their alma mater or hanging copies of their college degree.
- _____ Important college enrollment and financial aid deadlines are posted in classrooms and other locations throughout the school.
- _____ College messaging is integrated into events, including sports events or arts performances.
- _____ College success stories are prevalent throughout the school.
- _____ Student work is highly visible in the school and there are opportunities to showcase a wide variety of learning experiences.

Strategy and Evaluation

- _____ All school staff members are informed of key outcome measures, including your school's college-going rate and FAFSA completion rates.
- _____ Your school sets goals or benchmarks for improving college-readiness and reports regularly on progress.
- _____ Your school engages all stakeholders in creating a college-going culture or improving college-readiness.
- _____ Your school has created and is implementing an action plan for improving college-readiness.
- _____ Your school sponsors or provides professional development on the topics of college-readiness and success.

Academic Inclusiveness

- _____ To your **students and parents, and staff members**, “college” means any education and training after high school, including certificate programs, two-year degree programs, four-year degree programs, or military training.
- _____ Educators, administrators, and staff members extend information about postsecondary opportunities to **all students**.
- _____ Educators, administrators, and staff members encourage and counsel **all students** about postsecondary opportunities and the importance of pursuing education and training beyond high school.
- _____ Academics are recognized as the number one priority in your school and academic achievement is considered a universal point of pride.
- _____ All students are **expected** to pursue some form of postsecondary education and that expectation is conveyed clearly with support from school personnel.
- _____ College-readiness activities are integrated into regular coursework. For example, students learn to write scholarship application essays during English class or compute the cost of attendance in math.

Family, Community and Postsecondary Support

- _____ Family college planning events occur at least twice per year, outside of regular school hours.
- _____ Community leaders are invited to share their college and career experiences with students or to mentor students.
- _____ Recent alumni return to your school to share their college experiences and advice.
- _____ Community organizations and businesses post information about college or encouraging students to pursue postsecondary opportunities.
- _____ College and university staff members visit the school on a regular basis.
- _____ College and university faculty collaborate regularly with teachers at your school.
- _____ Counselors at your school have a close working relationship with admissions and financial aid representatives at colleges and universities.
- _____ Colleges and universities organize or help coordinate on-campus activities for your students.

College-Going Culture Assessment

Score each statement:

We are already doing this: **3**

We could do this easily or with a little effort: **2**

This would require a major change or a lot of time: **1**

Tally your score: _____

30-50 = Beginner

51-70 = Intermediate

71-90 = Advanced

Questions to Consider:

In what areas are you doing well?

Which areas need the most improvement?

What can you, as an individual, do to make improvements in your school?

Who else can you recruit to help make improvements?



Overview: West Virginia GEAR UP aims to fuel a college-going culture at each high school through the creation of peer-to-peer outreach groups led by students within the GEAR UP cohort (class of 2014). Eight to 20 students at each school will be identified as HEROs (Higher Education Readiness Officers).

These students will be charged with organizing their HEROs unit in order to assist the GEAR UP site coordinator with his or her duties, encourage student, parent and community involvement within the school and in the college-readiness process and serve as peer mentors for their fellow students. In addition, the HEROs will also have a voice in the overall direction of the GEAR UP program, particularly concerning program-wide outreach initiatives.

The GEAR UP site coordinator will serve as the group advisor in each school, and the site coordinator is responsible for organizing the HEROs unit, establishing the group's legitimacy as a student group within the school, and ensuring that HEROs students meet on a regular basis and accomplish their annual goals.

Selection of Students: Site Coordinators may recruit students to serve as HEROs as they see fit (nomination, election, etc.). A list of students who attended the 2010 GEAR UP U! summer academy is included as a starting point for identifying students who may be interested in the mission of the group. The ideal HERO is:

- Dedicated to utilizing her potential to the best of her ability and helping other students do the same;
- Positive, supportive, approachable and tolerant;
- Dedicated to pursuing some form of postsecondary education;
- A strong believer in the power of education;
- Someone who could benefit from being part of a supportive, engaging group; and
- Someone who could benefit from the opportunity to improve her leadership skills, self confidence and high school resume.

It may be a good idea to select a few students to begin with, and then allow those students to grow the group through additional recruitment, nomination or election processes.

Organization: The GEAR UP site coordinator will serve as the advisor for the group, but the students should take full ownership of the organization and its responsibilities. HEROs units should be made up of eight to 20 student members. Each group should then elect the following Directors:

- Director of Educator Support and Appreciation
- Director of Parent and Family Support and Engagement
- Director of Community Support and Engagement
- Director of Student Support and Engagement

Each director will be responsible for leading their committee (charged with the topics of educator support and appreciation; parent and family support and engagement; community support and engagement; and student support and engagement). Every HEROs unit member should serve on a committee. Committees should be relatively equal in size.

Note: In the case of a smaller group of students (i.e. eight), it may be best to elect a Director and an Associate Director for each of the four project topics, rather than having a Director and one committee member.

Students may decide their own forms of governance, but it is recommended that students make major decisions by voting either as a unit or as a committee.

To become an official HERO, students must register with central office so that they can receive updates on program-wide activities and initiatives.

HEROs should register at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/guhero>

Projects and Duties: The HEROs unit should meet at least once per month with the advisor. Each month, the HEROs should tackle the projects outlined below. When possible, all four committees should look for ways to accomplish their goal and reach their target audience through the activities associated with each project. In some instances it will be appropriate for one particular committee to play a larger role than the others (ex. the Educator Support and Appreciation Committee may want to take the lead in December).

September: Build your team! Organize the HEROs unit and support the site coordinator with the 2010 welcome back event.

October: One big happy family! Work with the site coordinator to develop the first parent and family event outlined on the 2010-11 work plan.

November: Apply yourself! Utilize the marketing materials provided to promote College Application Week at the school. In addition, the HEROs should develop and implement at least one additional marketing idea to help promote either the activities of College Application Week, or to inform students about the various colleges and universities in the state.

December: 'Tis the season to show your appreciation. Develop and implement an activity to show the educators in the school that their hard work and support are valued.

January: Start the new year off right! Develop and implement an activity to help students in the school set goals for their future — including education, career and life goals.

February: In honor of Valentine's Day, show the senior class some love by reminding them to apply for financial aid and to attend a College Goal Sunday workshop.

March: Looking ahead — encourage students in the class of 2014 to apply for GEAR UP U! and remind the seniors to RSVP for the Governor's Honors Symposium.

April: Join forces. Organize and host a local College Access and Student Success Summit in order to encourage students, parents, educators and community members to join forces in improving college going rates within the region.

May: Re-cap! Showcase the work of your HEROs unit this year by putting together a recap — this can be a video, collage, online presentation, magazine — or anything else you can think of to show off all you've accomplished.

Throughout the year: HEROs should also actively promote all other GEAR UP activities to their classmates, families and teachers. HEROs and their advisors will also receive frequent updates, promotional materials, and ideas for marketing events and services from central office staff. Media kits will be provided for major activities, including:

- College Application Week
- College Goal Sunday
- The GEAR UP Incentive Award
- The Governor's Honors Symposium
- GEAR UP U!

Questions about HEROs? Contact Jessica Kennedy at (304) 558-0655 or jkennedy@hepc.wvnet.edu.

KEY PROGRAM COMPONENTS

STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Categorized below are four key components to student leadership development activities within the WV GEAR UP program. Each component is highlighted by examples of initiatives or projects that the student leadership groups design, coordinate and/or participate in to assist in creating a college-going culture. Feel free to use these examples to implement activities within your student leadership model.

Outreach Initiatives

Town Hall Meetings, Business and Industry Outreach Efforts for Scholarship Dollars, Event Planning Media Outreach, Student Body Presentations, Annual Conference: Student Presentations, ACT Prep Awareness Activity, Photography and Outreach Display Projects, Faculty Senate Student Presentations, Higher Education Day at the Legislature Information Booths, Pay It Forward: Student Leadership Initiative in Feeder Schools

Projects and Social Campaigns

Interview Key Educational Stakeholders, Teens for Jeans Campaign, Can Food Drive, Toy Drive, Nursing Home Visitation, Blanket Drive, Cancer Awareness - Donations for the Cure, Book Drive, Christmas Tree Project, Christmas Card Project, Healthy Heart Thursday, House Fire Project, Jacob's Well Food Project, College Application Week Video Project, Facebook/Twitter Outreach Initiatives, High-Five Fridays, Teddy Bear Hospital Project for Children, Drug-Free All-Star Basketball Game Organized Event, Rachel's Challenge

Student Leadership Challenges

How Strong Is Your College Knowledge Video Production, 4Q Challenge Question Video Production, Student Leadership Academy: School Spirit Roll Call, College Readiness Skits, College of the Week School Announcement Challenge, GEAR UP U!: Student Success Summit Challenges

Event Planning and Program Support Efforts

Host A College Access and Student Success Summit, College Goal Sunday, College Application and Exploration Week Efforts, Financial Aid Awareness Activities, Freshmen and New Student Orientation, College Corners, Co-Coordinate Financial Aid Night, Event Greeters/Servers for Key Stakeholders, Personal Event Invitations by Students, Educator Appreciation Efforts, Annual Student and Parent Survey Activity Efforts, College Bulletins and Board Displays, College Access Morning News Segments