Brandi Graybill: From GEAR UP Student to GEAR UP Employee

As a GEAR UP student at Southeast High School (Yoder, Wyoming), Brandi Graybill knew her family couldn’t afford to send her to college. Working with GEAR UP, she was able to earn the Hathaway Scholarship as well as several other scholarships. These scholarships enabled her to afford college, and she graduated from Eastern Wyoming College with an associate of arts degree. She became the first person in her family to graduate from college. Now, she works full time as the database technician for the Eastern Wyoming College GEAR UP program.

In the interview below, Brandi discusses her background and transition from a GEAR UP student to a GEAR UP employee.

GUWy: How did you learn about the GEAR UP program?

Brandi: In the spring of 2005, I received information about GEAR UP. I didn’t quite understand what it was about, but one thing I did know was that they were touring Wyoming that summer, and I wanted to go. I had never gone anywhere besides Scottsbluff, Nebraska, Cheyenne, Wyoming, and my home town of Torrington, Wyoming. I filled out the paperwork, and Judy Brown [GEAR UP director at Eastern Wyoming College] called me a few weeks later and told me to pack my bags, because I was one of the students selected to go. That was the start of a lifelong journey.

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Students Visit Daniels Fund Corporate Offices

On June 12, 2014, GEAR UP students from Western Wyoming Community College visited the Daniels Fund corporate offices in Denver, Colorado.

The Daniels Fund staff welcomed the students with stories about philanthropist Bill Daniels’ journey and legacy. After viewing displays in the lobby, students gathered for a presentation about the Daniels Scholarship Program process. The Daniels Scholarship Program provides a four-year, annually-renewable college scholarship for graduating high school seniors in Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico who demonstrate exceptional character, leadership, and a commitment to serving their communities. They also learned about Bill Daniels’ nine core values which guided his every decision and behavior.

Traci Countryman, GEAR UP outreach specialist, gave an overview of characteristics that the Daniels Fund selection committee desires in candidates. Traci also
Brandi Graybill, former GEAR UP student and database technician for the Eastern Wyoming College GEAR UP program.

GUWY: When did you become involved in GEAR UP, and what was it like?

Brandi: I joined GEAR UP the summer before 7th grade. It was exciting, yet terrifying, because I was with a lot of other kids, and I am very shy. I had to step outside of my box, but as it became more fun, I ended up looking forward to everything GEAR UP-related.

GUWY: Did GEAR UP make a difference in helping you prepare for college?

Brandi: Very much so. Without GEAR UP, I don’t know if I would have gone to college. I hated putting any type of money burden on my parents, knowing that I was spending money they didn’t have.

GUWY: What type of support did you receive from GEAR UP, and did it help?

Brandi: I received all of the support you could imagine. They helped me every step of the way, and even after high school, their support remained.

GUWY: What college did you attend, and why did you choose it?

Brandi: I attended Eastern Wyoming College, because I wasn’t ready to move away and live in the dorms. I live right outside of Torrington with my parents.

GUWY: What was it like transitioning from a GU student to a GU employee?

Brandi: It was easy in some ways, because I knew what the language meant. But when it came to the paperwork and the entering of information, it was a little harder, and I had a lot to learn. Working at Eastern Wyoming College has definitely given me an inside look into everything that I received growing up with the GEAR UP program. This program has helped me achieve a huge dream, and I couldn’t be more proud to be on the GEAR UP team now.

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conducted mock interviews with students to give them an idea of the type of questions asked during the finalist interview process. Students gathered in small groups to interview each other and practice these skills.

The Daniels Fund visit helped students understand what the Daniels Fund represents and the importance of the scholarship for the GEAR UP community.

“Visiting the Daniels Fund offices was a great experience. I have always been the type of person to get As, but since my visit to Daniels Fund, it has really opened my eyes to all the opportunities we have. Visiting Daniels Fund has inspired me to keep being a great student.”

– Judith Sanchez, Evanston High School

GEAR UP WYOMING Welcomes New Grant Manager

In December, Jenny Ingram joined GEAR UP WYOMING as grant manager. Prior to accepting the position, Jenny served as project coordinator with the University of Wyoming American Indian Studies Program. She also worked for twelve years with the Wyoming Humanities Council in Laramie managing their grant program.

With over ten years of experience in grant management and her work with students in some of Wyoming’s most isolated communities, Jenny’s expertise is a great asset to the GEAR UP program, and GEAR UP WYOMING is pleased to welcome her.

Follow GEAR UP WYOMING on:
The ACT® is an important college entrance exam. Scores can affect college entrance and scholarships.

All Wyoming eleventh-grade students will take the ACT® in April at their schools. Students who want to take the test again can visit the following ACT® website to register for the test and to locate testing centers: www.actstudent.org/regist/dates.html.

GEAR UP WYOMING students may contact their GEAR UP coordinator to obtain an ACT test fee waiver. (GEAR UP WYOMING cannot pay for or waive late fees.) Also, GEAR UP WYOMING students have free access to ACT® preparation programs.
Camp GEAR UP is a weeklong camp at University of Wyoming for entering 9th-12th grade students. The camp gives students a glimpse of college life and helps them explore their career and college interests.

2015 Camp GEAR UP is scheduled for July 13-17 at the University of Wyoming campus. Students should contact their GEAR UP coordinator for more details.