



From GEAR UP Wyoming | Spring 2025 | Vol. 4.4



GEAR UP Wyoming is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education totaling \$4,019,424 annually, with an additional \$4,019,424 annually provided by in-kind & scholarship contributors

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Are you ready for the latest news from GEAR UP Wyoming? From Spring Summit to Scholarships, there's plenty to see. Read below to stay informed on all of our updates!

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**GEAR UP
WYOMING**

What is our mission?

GEAR UP Wyoming strives to increase the number of low-income students who graduate high school and enter a post-secondary educational institution to improve their access to career and life opportunities. [Visit our page!](#)

Here are our spring updates:

Spring Summit: Cultivating Innovation and Growth

GEAR UP Wyoming (GUWY) gathered in Casper from April 14-16 for our annual Spring Summit meeting, where the theme "Space to Grow" inspired three days of connection, creativity, and future-focused planning. The theme took root throughout the event, reflected in presentation metaphors that explored growth, support, and transformation. From tracking progress and setting goals to nurturing student success and strengthening our program statewide, the Spring Summit was an opportunity for learning and collaboration.

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One highlight of the summit was a collaborative review of our Summative Report from the 2017 grant cycle, presented by our external evaluators. The report found that from 2017-2024, an average of 96% of GUWY students graduated high school, drastically exceeding our goal of 85%. From 2017 to 2024, GUWY students greatly exceeded Wyoming's overall FAFSA completion rates, averaging 73%, and received a total of \$13.6 million in scholarships.

In addition to highlighting the fact that GEAR UP works, this review laid the groundwork for GUWY achieving its goals over the next seven-year grant period.

During the summit, several exciting technology-based advancements were shared, including the debut of a new digital GUWY student application, along with updated digital policy manuals to improve internal policy accessibility and understanding. Both efforts will make it easier for both participants and program staff to access GEAR UP Wyoming information and resources.

Finally, the Spring Summit served as an invaluable opportunity to apply feedback from staff to improve grant functions statewide. From data processes to student programming, attendees were encouraged to learn from one another and share their ideas. GUWY partner site staff shared successful student activities, parent engagement strategies and provided feedback to improve GUWY grant administration. Together, we left the Spring Summit energized and equipped with fresh tools, shared vision, and plenty of space to grow.

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Avoiding Summer Melt: A Guide for Students and Educators

The excitement of a college acceptance can quickly turn into stress, especially for low-income and first-generation students, who are at greater risk of experiencing summer melt, which is when students who are accepted into college never actually enroll in the fall. While the causes of summer melt are numerous, they generally fall into three categories: lack of support, competing responsibilities, and financial barriers.

While paying for college is a significant concern, many students from low-income families also take on major responsibilities at home. Whether they're working to contribute to household income or providing childcare, these duties often take priority over college preparation. In some cases, students even choose to delay or forgo college entirely to continue supporting their families.



If you're helping at home, it's essential to communicate your plans with your family early. This gives them time to arrange for alternative childcare and adjust to any changes in household income. It's natural to feel a sense of responsibility, but it's important to remember that these responsibilities aren't yours alone. Going to college is a long-term investment in your, and your family's, future. Though your absence may require short-term adjustments, it can also reduce household costs. Fewer groceries, lower utility use, and less caretaking can help ease the impact of your absence.

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So how can students avoid summer melt? Start by staying organized. Keep a running list of scholarships and financial aid updates. Some awards may not show up on your financial aid summary right away, so monitoring them can prevent any surprises later.

Seek support early. Don't wait until the last minute to figure out college financial aid, housing, or course registration. If you're unsure where to turn, reach out to your GEAR UP Wyoming advisor or your college's admissions or financial aid office. Your GUWY advisor is available all summer to assist you in completing all of your fall college enrollment tasks.

Educators also play a role. Providing students with timelines, checklists, and ongoing encouragement throughout the summer can make a huge difference. Emotional support matters just as much as logistical guidance, especially for students dealing with financial stress or family obligations. Hosting summer workshops or check-ins can help keep students engaged and on track. Summer melt is preventable. With early planning, clear communication, and strong support, every student can confidently make the leap from high school to college—and take that first step toward a brighter future.



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There's Still Time to Apply for Scholarships

While it may feel like scholarship season is winding down, there's still plenty of time to apply for awards that can help you pay for your education. Remember, scholarships aren't just for early birds, they're for everyone who takes the time to search and apply.

Even if you've already applied for some scholarships, don't stop now. There are still many opportunities out there, and there might be less competition than you think. Every application you submit is another chance to get free money for college. Whether you're applying for general scholarships, specific fields of study, or unique talents, every little bit counts.

Take advantage of this time to find scholarships that may still be open and relevant to you. Click the link below to view and apply for scholarships by their deadlines.

[View scholarships by deadline here!](#)

Make the most out of scholarship season by taking advantage of free tools like the Common App, a college application website that helps match first year students with scholarships, and the Encourage App, a college prep app that provides college and scholarship matches based on your unique profile. Keep up the hard work and stay motivated. With every application, you're getting one step closer to making your college dreams a reality. Keep applying, and good luck!

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Professional Development: WySCA Wrap-Up

On February 19th, GEAR UP Wyoming proudly sponsored the keynote speaker at the Wyoming School Counselor Association conference. Mark Perna, author of *Answering Why*, delivered a powerful message on how to better engage students and keep them invested in their education. Perna emphasized that modern students need to understand the bigger picture of education, and more importantly, why education should matter to them. It's no longer enough to say "Do well in high school so you can go to college." Students need a reason to pursue that path.



To help answer the 'why,' Perna offered several strategies, all centered on building relationships with students. Having conversations and learning about the students' goals and dreams can offer educators more leverage in getting students invested in their education than you might think. Understanding what a student wants or expects in their life opens the door to tools, like degree mapping.

Perna used his own son's experience with education as an example of degree mapping. His son, finding little value in education, had fully checked out until he discovered computer programming. Having discovered a career path he found interesting, he reinvested in his education with the understanding that to reach his career goal, he would need to graduate high school and complete college.

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Perna also addressed students who respond to the question “what is your dream job” with “I don’t dream of working” by explaining lifestyle mapping. Instead of asking students about their dream job, ask about the lifestyle they envision. Do they want a nice car? To live in a city? To travel? These things cost money! By connecting lifestyle desires to potential salaries, students can then explore careers that align with their lifestyle goals. Perna expressed how he believes that students will work hard, but only if they understand the value of their efforts.

Stay tuned for more GEAR UP Wyoming sponsored professional development events. We’re committed to supporting low-income students, whether by promoting engagement and high school graduation, encouraging postsecondary completion, or addressing students’ unique needs. GEAR UP Wyoming remains dedicated to keeping students on “The Path” to success.



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