

# National GEAR UP Academy

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February 12-15, 2024  
Online





# National GEAR UP Academy

February 12 - 15, 2024 | Online

MON   FEB 12	TUES   FEB 13	WED   FEB 14	THURS   FEB 15
		12:00 - 12:30 PM ET Exhibitor Sessions	
		12:30 - 1:00 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break	
	1:00 - 1:45 PM ET Welcome & Keynote	1:00 - 1:45 PM ET Welcome & Keynote	1:00 - 1:45 PM ET Welcome & Keynote
	1:45 - 2:00 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break	1:45 - 2:00 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break	1:45 - 2:00 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break
2:00 - 3:30 PM ET Introduction to GEAR UP and NCCEP Those new to GEAR UP are encouraged to attend.	2:00 - 3:00 PM ET Classes   Block 1	2:00 - 3:00 PM ET Classes   Block 3	2:00 - 3:00 PM ET Classes   Block 5
	3:00 - 3:15 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break	3:00 - 3:15 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break	3:00 - 3:15 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break
2:00 - 4:30 PM ET Directors' Meetings	3:15 - 3:45 PM ET Team Time	3:15 - 3:45 PM ET Team Time	3:15 - 3:45 PM ET Team Time
3:30 - 4:00 PM ET Break	3:45 - 4:00 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break	3:45 - 4:00 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break	3:45 - 4:00 PM ET Exhibit Hall & Break
4:00 - 4:45 PM ET Social Engagement	4:00 - 5:00 PM ET Classes   Block 2	4:00 - 5:00 PM ET Classes   Block 4	4:00 - 5:00 PM ET Classes   Block 6
			5:00 - 5:15 PM ET Closing

All times are Eastern Time. The schedule will be updated as needed.

1/16/2024



The 2024 National GEAR UP Academy is coordinated by the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP), the association of the GEAR UP program.

# Class Calendar

	TUESDAY   FEBRUARY 13		WEDNESDAY   FEBRUARY 14		THURSDAY   FEBRUARY 15	
	2:00 – 3:00 pm ET	4:00 – 5:00 pm ET	2:00 – 3:00 pm ET	4:00 – 5:00 pm ET	2:00 – 3:00 pm ET	4:00 – 5:00 pm ET
College Knowledge and Readiness	The Power of Work-Based Learning	The Evolution of the College Application Essay	GEAR UP 101: Why College Matters	Discussion Lab: Empowering Education - The Transformative Role of AI	Showcase: Maximizing Dual-Enrollment Opportunities	Better FAFSA: The Latest Updates and Questions Answered
Communications	GEAR UP 101: Building Your Brand Kit	Spreading the #GEARUPworks Message: How to Build Relationships with Media	All About Algorithms: How Social Media Works and What You Can Do		Level Up: Strengthening Your Congressional Relationships	Discussion Lab: Communication Strategies By Audience - What Works for You?
Data, Research, and Evaluation	Showcase: GEAR UP Research Symposium	GEAR UP 101: Data and Evaluation	Create an Infographic in 5 Easy Steps	APR and FPR Overview	APR Technical Manual and Data Infrastructure	Harnessing Evidence: Strategies for Strengthening Your GEAR UP Program
Family Engagement	Discussion Lab: Engaging Whole Families	Creating Lasting Memories: Unleashing the Fun in Family Engagement Programs	Building Trust with Families	GEAR UP 101: Family Engagement		Showcase: Having Real Conversations with Families
Grant Administration	GEAR UP 101: Understanding GEAR UP Administrative Controls	The Keys to Audit Readiness	Pulling Back the Curtain: An Introduction to ED Post-Award Monitoring	C.R.E.A.M: An Introduction to Managing GEAR UP Money	Discussion Lab: Navigating the GEAR UP Match	Showcase: More than Numbers - Aligning the Budget Process to GEAR UP Strategy
Professional Skills	Make Today a Masterpiece: 10 Leadership Strategies Anyone Can Use			The Art of Self-Care: Strategies for Caring for Yourself and Others	GEAR UP 101: Professional Skills	
Program Planning	Showcase: Summer Programming at its Finest	GEAR UP 101: Planning Successful and Intentional College Campus Visits	Discussion Lab: Exploring Logistics for Successful GEAR UP Student Events	Showcase: Setting up for Success in the GEAR UP 7th Year	Save the Dates: Use NCAN's Calendar to Make Programming Run Like Clockwork	Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Summer Melt
Student Support	Supporting Students' Social, Emotional & Behavioral Wellness in School and Beyond	Discussion Lab: The Role of a GEAR UP Counselor and Advisor	Developing the Whole Student: Skills for Success in School, Work, and Life	Developing Proactive Learners	Unlocking Futures: Ensuring Students with Learning Disabilities Thrive in Postsecondary Environments	GEAR UP 101: Student Engagement - Developing a Clearer Picture

# Monday | February 12<sup>th</sup>

## Pre-Conference | 2:00 – 3:30 pm Eastern Time

### **GEAR UP 101: Introduction to GEAR UP and NCCEP**

Welcome to the family! Let's begin the GEAR UP journey together.

Are you new to GEAR UP and/or interested in learning more about NCCEP? If yes, this is the session for you! Join your fellow new hires, re-hires, and seasoned GEAR UP colleagues for a deep dive *into all things* GEAR UP and NCCEP.

During this session, we will:

- Discuss the history, mission, vision, goals, and objectives of GEAR UP and what makes the program unique.
- Share how GEAR UP is funded and how this translates into supporting the work you do within your school community.
- Review strategies and tips to support you in your work as a GEAR UP professional through collaborating with NCCEP and building relationships within the national GEAR UP community.

Plan to walk away from class with information, tools, and resources to help you implement GEAR UP in your everyday work and programs to support you throughout your GEAR UP journey.

#### **Speakers:**

*April E. Bell, Director of Constituent Relations, NCCEP*

*Lauren Foley, Associate Director of Professional Development, NCCEP*

*Kelly Pappas, Director of Career & College Clubs, NCCEP*

## Directors' Meetings | 2:00 – 4:30 pm Eastern Time

### **Partnership Directors' Meeting (2:00 – 3:00 pm Eastern Time)**

This is an invitational meeting and pre-registration with NCCEP is required to access the meeting.

The Partnership GEAR UP Directors' meeting will include an update about the upcoming GEAR UP competition and revisions to the GEAR UP APR/FPR with key insights from NCCEP senior staff regarding the partnership portion of the Request for Proposals. Directors will have an opportunity to submit questions in advance or ask questions during the meeting. Please note that this meeting is invitation-only and should only be attended by GEAR UP Partnership Directors and/or Principal Investigators who have been designated as such by the U.S. Department of Education.

### **State Directors' Meeting (3:30 – 4:30 pm Eastern Time)**

This is an invitational meeting and pre-registration with NCCEP is required to access the meeting.

The State GEAR UP Directors' meeting will include an update about the upcoming GEAR UP competition and revisions to the GEAR UP APR/FPR, with key insights from NCCEP senior staff regarding the state portion of the Request for Proposals. Directors will have an opportunity to submit

questions in advance or ask questions during the meeting. Please note that this meeting is invitation-only and should only be attended by GEAR UP State Directors and/or Principal Investigators who have been designated as such by the U.S. Department of Education.

## Social Engagement | 4:00 – 4:45 pm Eastern Time

### **B-I-N-G-O!**

We're back! Join us as we jump into this classic game and race to 5 across, down, or diagonal.

Test your luck to be the first to five or blackout. See you there!

#### **Speakers:**

*Janeé Williams, Associate Director of Programs and Operations, NCCEP*

*Lauren Foley, Associate Director of Professional Development, NCCEP*

### **Backstreet Boys said it...Everybody, Rock Your Body!**

We have been sitting all day, so let's take some time to rock our bodies. Come join us for this interactive session where we move our bodies, dance to some music, and have some fun. Let's reengage our bodies so we can reengage our minds.

Everybody...yeah...rock your body...yeah...everybody, rock your body right. GEAR UP's back, alright!

#### **Speakers:**

*Linda Hayden, Founder, Break Out and Dance*

*Kelly Pappas, Director of Career & College Clubs, NCCEP*

### **Speed Networking: Grow Your Professional Community**

Don't love traditional networking events? Join this unique opportunity to engage in purposeful conversations with other GEAR UP professionals. It's like speed dating ... for professionals! Meet people quickly, efficiently, and never get stuck talking to someone who isn't a good fit.

This is why we've limited it to five 5-minute rounds with 2-3 people each. This will allow you to meet 5-10 GEAR UP professionals in 45 minutes. Come prepared to connect, collaborate, and build your network in this fast-paced session.

#### **Speaker:**

*Dana Beck, Director of Practice, NCCEP*

*Adriana Feijoo, Coordinator of Operations and Programs, NCCEP*

# Tuesday | February 13th

Keynote | 1:00 – 1:45 pm Eastern Time

## What is Your Legacy?



**Frederick Shegog, CEO, The Message LLC**

We only get one life, so why not let education be the reason it changed forever? Administrators, faculty, and educators at all levels are immersed in the ever-changing world of education. Current research highlights the critical and diverse needs of each student. “What is your legacy?” is a guided tutorial filled with motivation, passion, and pain-driven energy to inspire audiences to educate the whole student.

*Introduction by Alex Chough, President, NCCEP*

Class Block One | 2:00 – 3:00 pm Eastern Time

## The Power of Work-Based Learning: Building Agency and Social Capital through Career Experiences

College Knowledge and Readiness

Based on a continuum of experiences from middle school through postsecondary transitions, work-based learning is an essential element of an education that helps young people develop agency, efficacy, and social capital.

During this class, we will explore how, through work-based learning, students are able to make informed decisions about secondary and postsecondary education and training necessary to open doors to their future.

### **Speaker:**

*Jonathan Payne, Ph.D., Director, Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, Jobs for the Future*

## GEAR UP 101: Building Your Brand Kit

Communications and Advocacy

In a world filled with visual noise and competition, having a strong and cohesive brand identity is crucial for any program looking to stand out.

During this class, speakers will guide you through the process of creating and using a brand kit, a fundamental tool to maintain consistency and convey the GEAR UP message effectively.

### **Speakers:**

*Brandi Lyndell, Director of GEAR UP Outreach, Woodward Hines Education Foundation*

*Dana Beck, Director of Practice, NCCEP*

## Showcase: GEAR UP Research Symposium

### Data, Research, and Evaluation

In this class, experienced GEAR UP researchers and evaluators will share research studies conducted in the GEAR UP community.

Topics and presenters include:

- *College Visits as Predictors of Postsecondary Enrollment*
  - Corinne Smith, Appalachian State University
  - Jui-Teng Li, Appalachian State University
  - Ross Gosky, Appalachian State University
- *GEAR UP George Works! An Evaluation of the Relationship Between GEAR UP Georgia Activities and Postsecondary Enrollment*
  - Comfort Afolabi, Xcalibur
  - Dawn Cooper, University System of Georgia
  - Melissa Gattuso, Xcalibur
  - Julie Jaramillo, Xcalibur
- *Perspectives from PA State GEAR UP Participants and Partners*
  - Christy King, PA State GEAR UP
  - Pam Carter, FHI360

Methodological approach, findings, and implications will be shared.

#### **Speaker:**

*Chrissy Tillery, Ed.D., Vice President of Research and Evaluation, NCCEP*

## Discussion Lab: Engaging Whole Families

### Family Engagement

*Come ready to participate in breakout room discussions!*

When you think about family engagement, who comes to mind? Who are the family members you envision?

In this conversation, we'll explore ways to change our preconceptions about what a family is in our unique communities. As we redefine our vision of families and family engagement, we'll revisit how we can serve whole families to support student success.

Join us to share and learn from one another about how we can engage whole families.

#### **Speakers:**

*Yisel De Oleo, Director of Family Engagement, Onward We Learn*

*Yolanda Adams, Assistance Director of Student Leadership & Parent Outreach, GEAR UP Appalachian State University*

## GEAR UP 101: Understanding GEAR UP Administrative Controls

### Grant Administration

A fundamental obligation of every GEAR UP program is ensuring that the taxpayers' investment in your work is secure.

During this workshop, we will explore what the federal expectations are for establishing strong GEAR UP administrative controls, identify unique compliance challenges in GEAR UP, and discuss recommendations for developing your compliance strategies.

This class is designed for any new GEAR UP leader, finance and compliance specialists, or partner that contributes to your program's compliance infrastructure.

**Speakers:**

*Marcie Mills, Director, Washington Student Achievement Council / Washington State GEAR UP  
Durice Wallace, Fiscal Manager, Tennessee Higher Education Commission / GEAR UP Tennessee  
Alex Chough, President, NCCEP*

## **Make Today a Masterpiece: 10 Leadership Strategies Everyone Can Use**

### **Professional Skills**

Enter the term "leadership" into any internet search engine and approximately eight BILLION web pages shout back, "I know something about leadership!"

It is easy to become overwhelmed by leadership advice and to know what really makes sense for you in your work. Long-time friend of NCCEP and GEAR UP, Dr. John Barker, writes about leadership weekly in a post he calls "Leadership News and Views" which he shares with hundreds of colleagues across the United States and around the world.

In this class, Dr. Barker will take participants on a journey through ten essential leadership strategies everyone can use to be better for their teams, and the world.

**Speaker:**

*John Barker, Co-Founder and Executive Director / Co-Facilitator, Tennessee Career Academy / NCCEP's District Leadership Institute*

## **Showcase: Summer Programming at its Finest**

### **Program Planning**

We're going to think sunshine and warmer temperatures as we dive into the fundamentals of summer programs!

Join us for an interactive showcase class where you will hear two GEAR UP professionals discuss their experiences planning summer programs. Participants will hear how one GEAR UP program has developed goals to establish strong outcomes for their summer programs, and hear from another who will explain details on the logistical din's-and-out's of summer programming.

You will walk away with best practices, new ideas, and you will start working on developing outcomes and goals for your own future summer program. Come prepared to participate – you'll be able to apply what you learn here immediately!

**Speakers:**

*Mallory Carpenter, College Access and Success Program Director, West Virginia GEAR UP  
Jamie Porter, GEAR UP Virginia Regional Manager, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia*

## **Supporting Students' Social, Emotional & Behavioral Wellness in School and Beyond**

### **Student Support**

An increasingly important area of student support is acknowledging and supporting student well-being. Join this class to learn more about evidence-based, positive, and proactive practices that support and respond to students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs in classrooms and similar teaching and learning environments.



In this class, we will discuss the importance of supporting students' wellness in the current context; highlight key considerations for supporting students, supporting educators, and partnering with families; and share free resources to support students in school and beyond.

Come ready to review and discuss resources that will assist you in implementing practices that support and respond to the needs of our students.

**Speaker:**

*Brandi Simonsen, Ph.D., Co-Director, Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*

## Team Time | 3:15 – 3:45 pm Eastern Time

Team Time is an opportunity for reflection and connection during the National GEAR UP Academy. NCCEP will provide questions to help you debrief your experience and learn from others.

You can participate in one of the following ways.

### **GEAR UP-led Team Time**

Grant Directors may host their own Team Time sessions either in-person or on a virtual platform of their choice.

Directors are responsible for coordinating this option, including securing meeting space / links, and inviting team members. Check with your GEAR UP Director or immediate supervisor to see if your team will be participating in this option.

### **NCCEP-led Team Time**

Alternatively, any participant may join a Team Time session on the National GEAR UP Academy online platform.

Be prepared to participate in small group breakout rooms. Attendees will network and share with GEAR UP professionals across the country. Each day includes a short opening conversation starter, a reflection on the keynote, and an opportunity to highlight a takeaway from a class.

## Class Block Two | 4:00 – 5:00 pm Eastern Time

### **The Evolution of the College Application Essay**

#### *College Knowledge and Readiness*

With the Supreme Court decision on race-conscious admissions, increased availability of Artificial Intelligence writing tools, and the ever-changing landscape of college admissions, the role of college application essays has evolved.

Join two former admissions officers for data insights, tools, and tips to support students through the essay writing process.

**Speakers:**

*Michaela Alcorn, Manager, Counselor Engagement, Common App*

*Jameia Tennie, Director, Student Engagement Programs (Reach Higher), Common App*

## Spreading the #GEARUPworks Message: How to Build Relationships with Media

### Communications and Advocacy

In today's fast-paced world, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception, spreading the #GEARUPworks message, and enhancing your GEAR UP program's visibility.

Learn skills and strategies to connect and engage effectively with journalists, reporters, and media outlets. Find out how to identify the right journalists and media contacts for your brand, build effective media lists, and master the art of pitching your story.

#### **Speakers:**

*Jessica Lilly, Communications Manager, GEAR UP Southern West Virginia*

*Liana Loewus, Managing Editor, WETA/PBS*

## GEAR UP 101: Data and Evaluation

### Data, Research, and Evaluation

In this class, NCCEP staff will provide an overview of the foundation of GEAR UP data and evaluation.

Topics will include an outline of data variables specific to GEAR UP as well as formative and summative evaluation processes and examples.

Grantees will learn how to be stewards of data and to use their logic model as a framework to meet short-, mid-, and long-term goals.

#### **Speakers:**

*Chrissy Tillery, Ed.D., Vice President of Research and Evaluation, NCCEP*

*Jackie Mania, Ed.D., Director of Research and Evaluation, NCCEP*

## Creating Lasting Memories: Unleashing the Fun in Family Engagement Programs

### Family Engagement

During this class, we will dive into the exciting world of family engagement programming and explore ways to make it an unforgettable experience for children and their families.

Join us as we discover innovative strategies to infuse fun and laughter into your programming, creating lasting memories for everyone involved. We will explore various creative activities, interactive games, and immersive experiences that promote bonding, communication, and active participation within families.

You will become equipped with practical ideas and techniques to enhance your family engagement initiatives. Speakers will provide ready-to-use activities to help improve the engagement and interaction of your family engagement programming.

#### **Speakers:**

*Carlos Ojeda, Jr., Creative Force & CEO, CoolSpeak*

*Ernesto Mejia, Vice President, CoolSpeak*

## The Keys to Audit Readiness

### Grant Administration

For many of us, the idea of a formal GEAR UP audit can invoke a lot of anxiety. While any audit can be a challenging process, by taking the right steps now, you can avoid potential risks later.

In this workshop, we will explore what to expect in an audit, identify unique risks that GEAR UP presents, and will detail what to have on hand to be audit ready.

This class is designed for any GEAR UP leader, finance and compliance specialists, or partner that contributes to your program's compliance infrastructure.

#### **Speakers:**

*Kevin Hall, Director of Operations, Partners for Rural Impact*

*Alex Chough, President, NCCEP*

## GEAR UP 101: Planning Successful and Intentional College Campus Visits

### Program Planning

Visiting college campuses is a hallmark of GEAR UP programming.

Walk through how to plan a purposeful and well-organized college visit using a step-by-step checklist. Learn strategies to ensure the experience is transformative and beneficial for students and families.

From building relationships with college partners to administering pre- and post-visit student surveys, leave feeling prepared to plan your next college visit!

#### **Speakers:**

*Alana Simmons, Ph.D., GEAR UP Director, GEAR UP Dougherty / Dougherty County School System*

*Dana Beck, Director of Practice, NCCEP*

## Discussion Lab: The Role of a GEAR UP Counselor and Advisor

### Student Support

*Come ready to participate in breakout room discussions!*

Providing direct student services can look different across GEAR UP programs. Yet, the commonality is how to increase college and career knowledge and readiness among our students and families.

During this conversation-based class, we'll identify some common challenges that GEAR UP counselors and advisors face when implementing GEAR UP services. Then, we'll brainstorm solutions, identifying what does work or could work across different programs.

Join us for this conversation and come ready to share, receive, and brainstorm new ideas.

#### **Speakers:**

*Monaliza Peña, GEAR UP Program Coordinator, Department of Higher Education-OSFA, GEAR UP Massachusetts*

*Antonio Junior-Robins, GEAR UP Program Manager, University of Michigan - Ann Arbor GEAR UP Program*

# Wednesday | February 14<sup>th</sup>

## Exhibitor Sessions | 12:00 – 12:30 pm Eastern Time

### **Spotlight: Career & College Clubs**

In this 30-minute session, come learn about NCCEP's Career & College Clubs and find out how this program and curriculum can be your go-to resource to serve your GEAR UP students and achieve your GEAR UP goals.

NCCEP's Career & College Clubs is a research-based, college and career readiness program and curriculum for grades 7 through 12. The ready-to-go activities focus on engagement and student leadership, and prepares students for success in college, career, and life. We're excited to meet you!

**Speaker:**

*Kelly Pappas, Director of Career & College Clubs, NCCEP*

### **Spotlight: Don't Worry, Be APPy with MAD-learn**

In this 30-minute session, you'll realize why you don't have to worry and stress about how to engage your students with STEM activities because you have MAD-learn - all you have to do is be APPy with us! Hear about student successes from GEAR UP programs all over the country and get information on Summer App Camps, school year events, in-school STEM, the NCCEP STEM Toolkit, and more. Take advantage of the chance to meet and greet and learn more about how we support our GEAR UP community. We can't wait to meet you! MAD-learn is Mobile App Development for every classroom. Our web-based app tool empowers students in design thinking, entrepreneurship, & STEM.

**Speakers:**

*Alefiya Master, Founder & CEO, MAD-learn*

*Doreen Frempong-Baah, Director of Internships/Marketing Coordinator, MAD-learn*

### **Spotlight: Paradigm Shift WILL Change Your Entire Summer Experience**

In this 30-minute session, you'll have the opportunity to meet the Paradigm Shift team and hear about all they do, get information on current and upcoming products and services, and ask questions. Take advantage of the chance to meet and greet with these sponsors and learn more about how they support our GEAR UP community. Paradigm Shift offers many workshops, camps, and curriculum specifically geared toward empowering your students to be the leaders of tomorrow. Our specialized experiential learning technique ensures your students dynamically participate in our material, ensuring they not only remember what they learn but are also prepared to apply it to their present and their future.

With a strong focus on inclusivity, our student leadership training programs are thoughtfully designed to cater to ALL students, embracing diversity and providing a nurturing environment for every individual to thrive.

**Speakers:**

*Dena Messop, Director of Student Access Sales, Paradigm Shift*

*Bryan Harris, GEAR UP Specialist, Paradigm Shift*

## Keynote | 1:00 – 1:45 pm Eastern Time

### Ready for the New World: Exploring Pathways to Careers



**Lydia Logan, Vice President for Global Education and Workforce Development, IBM**

As the future of work continues to evolve at a rapid pace, our nation is grappling with fundamental questions related to how to productively align our education and workforce systems. How do we close the skills gap? How do we ensure a more equitable future for our students? What policies and practices can help our students right now? Join Lydia Logan, the Vice President of Global Education and Workforce Development at IBM, as she shares her unique insights on where the world of work is heading and how we can best

prepare our GEAR UP students for the challenge.

*Introduction by Chrissy Tillery, Ed.D., Vice President of Research and Evaluation, NCCEP*

## Class Block Three | 2:00 – 3:00 pm Eastern Time

### GEAR UP 101: Why College Matters

#### College Knowledge and Readiness

Increasingly, students and families are questioning the value of continuing their education beyond high school. Rising wages for jobs that don't require a college degree coupled with horror stories of student loan payments contribute to the sentiment that college isn't worth it.

This reality makes the work of GEAR UP even more challenging. So, why does college matter? Dive into the latest data, reflect on your own beliefs, and learn talking points to help you understand and communicate the value of education beyond high school to your students and families.

#### **Speakers:**

*Adrienne Enriquez, Director, Oregon GEAR UP*

*Dana Beck, Director of Practice, NCCEP*

### All About Algorithms: How Social Media Works and What You Can Do

#### Communications and Advocacy

Ever feel like you've made the most amazing social media post, but it gets no likes or comments? It could be because the algorithm isn't letting people even see your posts!

In this class, marketing terms like "algorithm" will become less scary and you will gain an understanding of why some posts go viral and others aren't even seen. Learn how to implement tactics that impact the algorithm and get an essential tool kit that goes beyond telling you to use #GEARUPworks.

#### **Speaker:**

*Laura Kingston, Owner, LK Digital*

## Create an Infographic in 5 Easy Steps

### Data, Research, and Evaluation

Does your data reporting need an upgrade? Come to this workshop to learn more about how to turn your data charts and graphs into more useful and understandable data visualizations and infographics.

In this class, we will walk you through an easy 5-step process and provide a number of helpful resources to help you tell your data story.

#### **Speaker:**

*Julie Jaramillo, Director of Evaluation & Data Insights, Xcalibur*

## Building Trust with Families

### Family Engagement

Honest, safe, and reliable. These are just a few words to describe what trust is. As we consider these descriptors, however, it can be challenging to find ways to put these words into actions.

In this workshop, we'll explore strategies to work with GEAR UP families in a way that builds honest, safe, and reliable environments. No doubt, building trust takes time and intentionality – and we'll discuss ways to build toward this.

Regardless of which grade level you serve, you'll leave this workshop with resources and ideas to build relationships with families with the ultimate goal of creating trust with GEAR UP families.

#### **Speakers:**

*Jill Manning, Program Coordinator, GEARUP4LA*

*Monica Padron, Family Specialist, UTRGV GEAR UP*

## Pulling Back the Curtain: An Introduction to ED Post-Award Monitoring

### Grant Administration

The better you understand how the U.S. Department of Education (ED) monitors your overall grant administration, implementation, and compliance, the better you can lead your program. This class will be led by the U.S. Department of Education, who will provide an overview of how ED monitors your progress, compliance, and key post-award milestones.

This class is designed for any GEAR UP leader, finance and compliance specialists, or partner that contributes to your program's compliance infrastructure.

#### **Speaker:**

*David Downey, Management Analyst, Grants Management Policy Division, U.S. Department of Education*

## Discussion Lab: Exploring the Logistics that Create Successful GEAR UP Student Events

### Program Planning

*Come ready to participate in breakout room discussions!*

Bring your challenges and wins around GEAR UP student events. In this discussion lab, we are going to examine the logistics and elements that produce productive student events.

From the planning stage to the day of, to everything in between, we are breaking down the logistical best practices that yield successful events.

**Speakers:**

*Andrea González Sotelo, Assistant Director, Arizona GEAR UP - Northern Arizona University*  
*Harold Burdette, GEAR UP Grant Analyst, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools*

## Developing the Whole Student: Skills for Success in School, Work, and Life

### Student Support

What comes to mind when you think about the types of skills that facilitate success in school, work, and life?

If you are like most people, you probably listed skills like persistence, collaboration, and resilience. These are known as social and emotional skills, and research demonstrates that they are crucial for adapting to and thriving in various settings. Our students, while incredibly talented, often need additional support to maximize their social and emotional skills.

During this class, you will gain useful tips and tools that adults (as educators and caregivers) can use to support students to develop their social and emotional skills to be all they can be.

**Speaker:**

*Alex Casillas, Executive Director Fellow, AERDF*

## Team Time | 3:15 – 3:45 pm Eastern Time

Team Time is an opportunity for reflection and connection during the National GEAR UP Academy. NCCEP will provide questions to help you debrief your experience and learn from others.

You can participate in one of the following ways.

### GEAR UP-led Team Time

Grant Directors may host their own Team Time sessions either in-person or on a virtual platform of their choice.

Directors are responsible for coordinating this option, including securing meeting space / links, and inviting team members. Check with your GEAR UP Director or immediate supervisor to see if your team will be participating in this option.

### NCCEP-led Team Time

Alternatively, any participant may join a Team Time session on the National GEAR UP Academy online platform.

Be prepared to participate in small group breakout rooms. Attendees will network and share with GEAR UP professionals across the country. Each day includes a short opening conversation starter, a reflection on the keynote, and an opportunity to highlight a takeaway from a class.

## Class Block Four | 4:00 – 5:00 pm Eastern Time

### Discussion Lab: Empowering Education - The Transformative Role of AI in Learning and Teaching

College Knowledge and Readiness

*Come ready to participate in breakout room discussions!*

Join this class to explore artificial intelligence in education and its potential for the GEAR UP community. This session will include a walkthrough of AI functionalities and their impact on education, college access, and professional work.

Discuss the benefits and challenges of AI in education, with a focus on STEM fields, and gain insights on using AI to enhance learning and teaching.

**Speaker:**

*Doug Thompson, Associate Director GEAR UP, Appalachian GEAR UP*

### APR and FPR Overview

Data, Research, and Evaluation

During this class, we will preview the newly revised GEAR UP Annual Performance Report (APR) and Final Performance Report (FPR), including implications for the upcoming federal deadlines.

We will review major changes and implications, as well as provide a brief overview of the collaboratively developed APR Technical Manual available through the Quad.

**Speakers:**

*Chrissy Tillery, Ed.D., Vice President of Research and Evaluation, NCCEP*

*Jackie Mania, Ed.D., Director of Research and Evaluation, NCCEP*

### GEAR UP 101: Family Engagement

Family Engagement

Whether you've been doing family engagement work for 20 years or 20 days, there is opportunity in going back to the basics. Foundational tools can help you revisit strategies you currently use, want to use, or want to learn more about.

During this class, we'll review a step-by-step process you can use in your family engagement planning. Come ready to start with a holistic perspective, then dive into specific strategies to get information from families and to families.

Together, we'll explore the practicality of a needs assessment, dive into recruitment strategies, and think through implementation that truly engages family members.

**Speakers:**

*Bill Spradlin, State Office Teacher-GEAR UP, GEAR UP Hawai'i*

*Katie Hill, Ph.D., Director of Programs, NCCEP*

*Betty Paugh Ortiz, Vice President of Programs, NCCEP*



## C.R.E.A.M: An Introduction to Managing GEAR UP Money

### Grant Administration

As the Wu-Tang Clan said, “cash rules everything around me.” Managing your GEAR UP financial resources is no easy task, given the multitude of rules and regulations pertaining to managing federal dollars.

In this class, we will explore the principles that define what is and isn’t an allowable cost; set expectations for procurement and contracts; identify compliance challenges with working with schools and districts; and consider key financial actions that require prior approval from the U.S Department of Education.

This class is designed for any GEAR UP leader, finance and compliance specialists, or partner that contributes to your program’s compliance infrastructure.

#### **Speakers:**

*Carlos Bing, State Director, College Access Programs, Ohio Department of Higher Education*

*Lois Bramwell, Consultant and Former Director, GEARUP4LA (CA)*

*Alex Chough, President, NCCEP*

## The Art of Self-Care: Strategies for Caring for Yourself and Others

### Professional Skills

Did you know that self-care is not selfish?

Join us for this class, where we will spend quality time discussing self-care, reviewing self-care activities, and practicing self-care techniques. Plan to walk away with self-care exercises you can replicate at home with family, at school with students, and at work with colleagues.

#### **Speakers:**

*April E. Bell, Director of Constituent Relations, NCCEP*

## Showcase: Setting up for Success in the GEAR UP 7th Year

### Program Planning

Are you preparing for your GEAR UP program’s 7th Year? The time to start planning is now, regardless of what year your grant is in! Join us for an interactive Showcase and hear from two GEAR UP professionals and their experiences in planning for and going through the GEAR UP 7th Year.

Expect to hear about some challenges these GEAR UP programs face and the solutions they implemented. Discover new ideas, tactics, and best practices and walk away with some tools that you can implement in your own program.

#### **Speakers:**

*Megan Houlihan-Aceto, Program Director, GEAR UP CT-CT State Community College Naugatuck Valley*

*Matt Gutsch, External Relations Manager, Get Ready / GEAR UP - Minnesota Office of Higher Education*

## Developing Proactive Learners

### Student Support

Got low energy students? The ultimate goal in education is to create lifelong learners that can effectively seek out opportunities, develop new skills, and use those skills toward a positive outcome.

That goal requires us to enable learners to function independently. With over thirty years of experience working directly with students, the Seeds team can provide a model of the tools and skills necessary to develop independent, proactive learners that engage in the learning process with energy and intention.

Come experience: new Reflective Practice tools that engage even the most resistant learners; the ORCA model for creating high-engagement, relevant learning experiences, five brain-based hot tips for improved learning capacity.

Additionally, every participant will leave with two free online resources: high-demand Growth Mindset workshop; educator version of TEDx talk, The Pandemic Brain.

### **Speaker:**

*Greg Evans, Founder and Director, Seeds Training*

*Justin Bourdeau, Director of Programs and Lead Trainer, Seeds Training*

# Thursday | February 15<sup>th</sup>

Keynote | 1:00 – 1:45 pm Eastern Time

## LLMs Have Entered the Chat: The Implications of Generative AI for the Future of Education



**Alex Kotran, CEO, the AI Education Project**

Over the past several years, the rapid development and use of artificial intelligence (AI) has captured the attention of educators and students alike. In every education setting, we are grappling with how to respond effectively to this emerging technology. AI will undoubtedly shape the future of teaching and learning, but how do we make it work for the better? Join aiEDU Co-Founder & CEO Alex Kotran, as he shares the latest developments in large language models and generative AI, and what the rapid pace of progress entails for students, educators and the K12 education system.

*Introduction by Betty Paugh Ortiz, Vice President of Programs, NCCEP*

Class Block Five | 2:00 – 3:00 pm Eastern Time

## Showcase: Maximizing Dual-Enrollment Opportunities for GEAR UP Students

### College Knowledge and Readiness

Dual-enrollment courses are a great way for students to earn college-credit early, improve academic performance, and explore career paths. In this showcase, we will explore how two different GEAR UP programs strategically worked with schools to maximize dual enrollment for their GEAR UP students.

Speakers will share what they did to create and support opportunities, and the outcomes of those efforts. You'll have an opportunity to explore ways to replicate those strategies and consider how to support dual enrollment locally.

### Speakers:

*Duane Gregg, GEAR UP TN Project Director, Tennessee Higher Education Commission*

*Riccardo Harris, Executive Director, Wichita State University - Southeast Wichita GEAR UP / West Wichita GEAR UP*

*Wilma Holloway, Program Director, Southeast Wichita GEAR UP*

## Level Up: Strengthening Your Congressional Relationships

### Communications and Advocacy

Having a productive relationship with Congress pays dividends. Whether you're trying to strengthen GEAR UP nationally, or navigating a challenge, having friends in high places can help.

Go beyond the form letters and call scripts by learning practical strategies for establishing and deepening your relationship with Congressional offices.

This class is designed for GEAR UP leaders of all levels wanting to level up their advocacy and influence.

**Speaker:**

*Alex Chough, President, NCCEP*

## **APR Technical Manual and Data Infrastructure**

### **Data, Research, and Evaluation**

This class provides a deep dive into the collaboratively developed APR Technical Manual available on NCCEP's membership platform, the Quad.

Participants will be among the first to access the APR Technical Manual, learn more about its structure and utility, and discuss how it can be used to prepare for and complete the APR.

**Speakers:**

*Jackie Mania, Ed.D., Director of Research and Evaluation, NCCEP*

*Chrissy Tiller, Ed.D., Vice President of Research and Evaluation, NCCEP*

## **Discussion Lab: Navigating the GEAR UP Match**

### **Grant Administration**

*Come ready to participate in breakout room discussions!*

With the pandemic-related GEAR UP match relief coming to an end, it is all hands on deck as we work to return to the \$1-to-\$1 match obligation. Will our work be harder or easier than before? What sources will we turn to? What can we learn from others?

Participate in this Discussion Lab to join your GEAR UP colleagues in a lightly facilitated conversation designed to explore known challenges and potential solutions for securing and documenting match.

This Discussion Lab will be dialogue driven, so please be prepared to have your camera on and contribute actively. This Lab is ideal for GEAR UP leaders, coordinators, finance staff, or anyone who is asked to generate and document match.

**Speakers:**

*Charmaine Chidester, Grants Director, Eastern Arizona College*

*Wendy Stack, Senior Advisor, NCCEP*

## **GEAR UP 101: Professional Skills**

### **Professional Skills**

It's no secret that one of the biggest hurdles to working on our professional skills lies in finding the time to dedicate to work on our professional skills when we are so busy at work! In this interactive workshop we are going to do just that – dedicate time to working on your professional skills.

We will start by clarifying what professional development is, exactly, and then we will determine what professional skills you want to work on using a short skills inventory exercise. We will also utilize a tool that can help you to set goals for yourself to make sure professional development happens.

You'll walk away with a clear understanding of what you want to work on, professional development options to review, and you'll start to work on a learning plan document that you can put to work right away.

**Speaker:**

*Lauren Foley, Associate Director of Professional Development, NCCEP*

## **Save the Dates: Use NCAN's Calendar to Make Programming Run Like Clockwork**

### **Program Planning**

Looking for more structure in your college readiness programs? The National College Attainment Network (NCAN) offers a calendar that follows the college and career readiness lifecycle year-round. For every month of the year, there are topics and activities that professionals can observe, practice, and plan for that will result in improved services to students and better programming overall.

Made up of numerous resources that are updated annually, there is something for every GEAR UP professional who works directly with students and families. In this workshop, you will hear from NCAN about their calendar, walk through this resource, and brainstorm how you can incorporate activities into your GEAR UP programming.

**Speaker:**

*Bill DeBaun, Senior Director, National College Attainment Network*

## **Unlocking Futures: Ensuring Students with Learning Disabilities Thrive in Postsecondary Environments**

### **Student Support**

Despite progress, individuals with learning disabilities continue to face stigma due to a lack of awareness and understanding regarding their capabilities in various settings, including in school, college, workplace, and community.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities has worked for 45 years to improve the lives of individuals with learning disabilities by empowering parents, students, and educators by transforming schools and advocating for equal rights and opportunities.

Let's learn how we can assist with creating a society in which every student with a learning disability possesses the academic, social, and emotional skills needed to succeed in school, at work, and in life.

**Speakers:**

*Jacqueline Rodriguez, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, National Center for Learning Disabilities*

*Nicole Fuller, Policy Manager, National Center for Learning Disabilities*

*Joey Hunziker, Director of Leadership and Organizing, National Center for Learning Disabilities*

## **Team Time | 3:15 – 3:45 pm Eastern Time**

Team Time is an opportunity for reflection and connection during the National GEAR UP Academy. NCCEP will provide questions to help you debrief your experience and learn from others.

You can participate in one of the following ways.

### **GEAR UP-led Team Time**

Grant Directors may host their own Team Time sessions either in-person or on a virtual platform of their choice.

Directors are responsible for coordinating this option, including securing meeting space / links, and inviting team members. Check with your GEAR UP Director or immediate supervisor to see if your team will be participating in this option.

### **NCCEP-led Team Time**

Alternatively, any participant may join a Team Time session on the National GEAR UP Academy online platform.

Be prepared to participate in small group breakout rooms. Attendees will network and share with GEAR UP professionals across the country. Each day includes a short opening conversation starter, a reflection on the keynote, and an opportunity to highlight a takeaway from a class.

## **Class Block Six | 4:00 – 5:00 pm Eastern Time**

### **Better FAFSA: The Latest Updates and Questions Answered**

#### **College Knowledge and Readiness**

The changes in the FAFSA continue to evolve.

During this class, a representative from Federal Student Aid will bring attendees up to date on the latest updates and the impact these changes have on the future of financial aid processes, financial aid awards, and aid dissemination.

#### **Speaker:**

*Fred Stennis, Supervisor, Federal Student Aid*

### **Discussion Lab: Communication Strategies By Audience - What Works for You?**

#### **Communications and Advocacy**

*Come ready to participate in breakout room discussions!*

Join us for this class to explore communicating GEAR UP information to multiple audiences (families, students, educators, and community) across various platforms. We know it can be rewarding AND challenging and we want to hear about your successful strategies, explore shared challenges, and brainstorm ideas on how to improve communications.

This Discussion Lab will use interactive tools and breakout rooms so come prepared to engage!

#### **Speakers:**

*Janet Stake, Director, Nevada System of Higher Education GEAR UP Programming & Outreach, Nevada System of Higher Education / GEAR UP Nevada*

## **Harnessing Evidence: Strategies for Planning, Developing, and Strengthening Your GEAR UP Program**

### **Data, Research, and Evaluation**

Join us for a valuable class designed for GEAR UP grantees, focused on harnessing the power of evidence-based practices in program planning and implementation. Discover how to effectively utilize What Works Clearinghouse research in conjunction with home-grown/local research and evaluations to enrich your GEAR UP initiatives.

Gain insights into crafting compelling grant proposals and developing programs that not only meet criteria for funding but also achieve tangible educational outcomes. You will become equipped with practical tools and strategies to transform existing research and evaluation results into ongoing real-world impact, ensuring your GEAR UP efforts are both effective and sustainable.

#### **Speakers:**

*Thomas Cech, Senior Data Scientist, NCCEP*

*Keren Brooks, Director of Evaluation, CoBro Consulting*

## **Showcase: Having Real Conversations with Families**

### **Family Engagement**

At the end of the day, the focus of family engagement is to support a student on their education journey. Using this as a focal point, we can create settings in which we have meaningful, impactful, and focused conversations with family members that share our aims.

Join us as we explore strategies that two GEAR UP programs have used to create relationships with families through real conversations about a student's education. We will explore ways that we can get to know our families, help them to know us, explore education options together, and ultimately, build trusting relationships through real talk.

#### **Speakers:**

*Cathy Printon, Vermont GEAR UP School and Family Partnership Coordinator, Vermont GEAR UP*

*Sylvia Vargas, Family & Community Engagement Specialist, Region One ESC*

## **Showcase: More than Numbers - Aligning the Budget Process to GEAR UP Strategy**

### **Grant Administration**

To improve student outcomes, we ask our schools and communities to adopt a strategic approach to strengthening the pathway to postsecondary education. How can GEAR UP leverage the budgeting process with participating schools and districts, to better meet our strategic and programmatic goals?

During this showcase, we will highlight two GEAR UP programs and explore how taking an integrated approach to budgeting, annual planning, and strategic goals can improve GEAR UP operations. This showcase is ideal for GEAR UP leaders, coordinators, finance staff, or anyone who is asked to coordinate budgets with participating schools.

#### **Speakers:**

*Kim Welch, Executive Director, GEAR UP Kentucky, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education*

*Marcie Mills, Director, Washington Student Achievement Council / Washington State GEAR UP*

## Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing Summer Melt

### Program Planning

Did you know that every year up to 40% of high school seniors are admitted to college but fail to matriculate in the fall? This phenomenon is called summer melt and is more prevalent for low-income students. Summer melt contributes to the gaps between low and high-income students in college enrollment and degree attainment.

Come to this class to learn more about factors that contribute to summer melt and strategies for preventing it. One strategy that we will focus on is the use of low-cost text messaging interventions to remind students of upcoming deadlines for completing steps related to college enrollment in the summer after high school graduation.

Presenters from American Institutes for Research will share findings from a large-scale study performed in four states about a strategy that they tested at scale.

#### **Speakers:**

*Elisabeth Davis, Ph.D., Principal Researcher, American Institutes for Research*

*Alberto Guzman-Alvarez, Ph.D., Research Data Scientist, American Institutes for Research*

*Jill Bowden, Ph.D., Principal Researcher, American Institutes for Research*

## GEAR UP 101: Student Engagement - Developing a Clearer Picture

### Student Support

Often, when we discuss student engagement, we focus on the challenges and difficulties related to it. In this workshop, we are going to discuss student engagement, but we are going to think about it from an empathy-perspective.

We will utilize an empathy-mapping tool as a strategy, and then work through an activity from NCCEP's Career & College Clubs curriculum to apply what we learn from the empathy-mapping tool. Using empathy mapping as a tool to relate with students enables us to see and develop a clearer picture of what our students are dealing with or facing in their lives.

#### **Speakers:**

*Lauren Foley, Associate Director of Professional Development, NCCEP*

*Noelle Sollman, GEAR UP Site Manager, Soap Lake M/H School.*

## Closing Session | 5:00 – 5:15 pm Eastern Time

### Where Are They Now? Celebrating GEAR UP Student Leader Award Winners



Each summer, NCCEP awards exemplary leaders from the GEAR UP community, including students, families, and staff. For this year's Academy, we tracked down prior Student Leader of the Year award winners to see what they are up to and learn what the lasting impact of GEAR UP has been on their lives. Join us to get an update on these students' whereabouts, celebrate a week of learning, and close out our time together.

**Speaker:** *Katie Hill, Ph.D., Director of Programs, NCCEP*





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# National GEAR UP Academy

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