



Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness  
for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)

# Key Messages

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December 2022

*Created by the NCCEP / GEAR UP Communications Advisory Committee*



## Using the Key Messages

Use this collection of brief, positive messages to communicate key information to GEAR UP students, families, and educators.

Each month has several messages listed, as well as the intended audience, hashtags for use on social media, and additional notes as needed. Feel free to edit and personalize them to best serve your communities.

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## September: Back to School

It's a brand-new year! As you get ready to head back to school, set yourself up for success by getting to know the resources that are here to help you reach your goals.

*Include a list of your program / school's specific resources*

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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GEAR UP provides information and resources to help students like you meet your post-high school goals! Find out more by getting connected to GEAR UP.

*Include ways to stay connected to your GEAR UP program.*

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Why apply to college? It's all about opportunity; you can't go to college if you don't apply. What's your reason?

*Why Apply Day is held each September.*

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks #WhyApply

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Happy National GEAR UP Week! Every year across the US, we take a few days to celebrate all the amazing ways GEAR UP helps students prepare for college.

*National GEAR UP Week is held each September; check [edpartnership.org/nguw](http://edpartnership.org/nguw) for dates. Include highlights from your GEAR UP program or upcoming events.*

Students, Families, Educators, Congress

#GEARUPworks #GUWeek

## October: Financial Literacy

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) opens October 1! Submit your FAFSA application as soon as possible. Don't want to miss out on potential FREE money for college.

*If available in your state, share the financial aid form for undocumented students.*

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Don't let student loans be scary. Know what student loans are and then decide which ones are right for you. Fill out the FAFSA application to find out what federal student loans you might qualify for. Federal student loans can help you pay for college.

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Do you like free money for college? Scholarships are the answer. Apply to as many as you can starting as soon as possible. There are some scholarships you can start applying to starting your freshman year of high school.

*Include information about the GEAR UP scholarship if applicable.*

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Want to save money for college? Don't know where to start? Budgeting and saving are key to saving money for school.

*Include information about 529 or IDA plans if available in your state.*

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

## November: College Applications

*November is College Application Month, encourage students to use #IApplied*

College application deadlines are fast approaching! Do you know what you need to complete your college applications? Get organized and make a list today.

12th Grade Students

#GEARUPworks

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It's time to celebrate First Generation Day! Whether you're a first-generation college student yourself, or supporting first-generation college students in GEAR UP, this day is a great day to celebrate going to college.

*First Gen Day is November 8*

Students, Families, Educators

#GEARUPworks #FirstGenDay

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College essays are a great way to tell your story. Colleges and universities want to know how great you are, and they provide you with a variety of topics to choose from. Start writing a draft now to share what makes you unique.

12th Grade Students

#GEARUPworks

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Did you know that as a GEAR UP student you can apply to college for free? Complete and submit a college application fee waiver form for every college you apply to.

12th Grade Students and Families

#GEARUPworks

## December: Use Your Break Well

Make sure you end the semester strong – don't let up on schoolwork. Find a group of friends to study with and hold each other accountable.

Students

#GEARUPworks

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Be sure to balance your physical and mental health with the demands of school and/or work. Practice good study habits and schedule time for breaks and fun. Always ask for help if you need it.

Students, Families, Educators

#GEARUPworks

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It's never too early to start making moves toward a career. Explore internships and part-time jobs to help you explore what you might want to study in college. Take the time before the year ends to make connections and plan to get experience.

Students

#GEARUPworks

## January: Personal Keys to Success

It's a new year! Start the year off by reflecting on your goals: (1) identify what you want, (2) Develop your skills by investing in yourself, (3) Be mindful of how you communicate, (4) Work hard, (5) Always be willing to learn more.

Students

#GEARUPworks

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Being S.M.A.R.T. is easy! Set Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, & Time-based goals. This is how you can begin to make informed decisions about your future.

Students

#GEARUPworks

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Don't let stress get the best of you. Take small breaks throughout the day to breathe & reconnect with your purpose. Reconnecting with your why can help focus & manage stress.

Students, Families, Educators

#GEARUPworks

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Promote yourself! We challenge you to be proud to show others what you have to offer because you matter. What are you great at? How have you improved your skills over time?

Students

#GEARUPworks

## February: Build Relationships

Thinking about moving away from home to begin your college future can be scary, but don't worry! GEAR UP is here to support you through those transitions while maintaining a close connection to your family and community.

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Are you a family member of a future college student? Worried about how to help them navigate through new experiences? That's normal – and GEAR UP is here to help.

Families

#GEARUPworks

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Who you hang out with matters. Surround yourself with friends and adults that share positive goals and interests. Consider how you can be a mentor or role model to younger students, too.

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Exploring a potential college campus as a family is a fun and meaningful way to prepare your future college student. Can't take a trip? Explore college websites and online reviews together.

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks



## March: Plan for the Future

College and career can feel far off. But it's time to start making a plan now! Start with a big picture goal, then figure out the steps you need to achieve it. You've got this.

7th - 11th Grade Students

#GEARUPworks

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What will you be doing next year? It's not too late to make a plan. Many colleges are still accepting applications, so talk to a coordinator or counselor today.

12th Grade Students

#GEARUPworks

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Students need your support in planning for their future. Talk with your student about their goals and your hopes to come up with a plan.

Families

#GEARUPworks

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GEAR UP relies on your advocacy for continued funding from the federal government. How has GEAR UP helped you or your community? Share with your Members of Congress today!

Students, Families, Educators

#GEARUPworks

## April: Make Decisions

There are many paths you can take to reach success! If you are considering joining a branch of the military, talk with a recruiter and/or current/former military members. If it's a good fit for you, the military has many ways to help pay for college.

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Choosing your future career can feel overwhelming. Here's how to start: (1) make a list of your skills, strengths, and interests, (2) Take dual credit courses and internships during high school to help you identify a good career fit, (3) then it's time to figure out the education you need to get you where you want to go, (4) Finally, narrow down your education program options.

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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There's a lot to think about when choosing a college/career training program - whether you want to earn a certificate or 2- or 4-year degree, where you want to live - and more! Finding the option that's best for YOU can have an impact on your success.

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Choosing a college is a big decision – and money is a part of that. Compare financial aid offers carefully & consider all the costs including housing and transportation.

12th Grade Students and Families

#GEARUPworks

## May: Celebrate!

It's time to celebrate! Whatever pathway you're taking after high school, we are proud of you. We recognize your hard work and decision to reach higher.

*College Signing Day is celebrated in early May.*

12th Grade Students

#GEARUPworks #CollegeSigningDay #BetterMakeRoom

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It's Teacher Appreciation Week: thank the teachers in your life this week! They work hard to help you achieve your goals. A handwritten thank you note goes a long way!

Seniors, be sure to thank those who took the time to write letters of recommendation for your scholarship or college application.

*Teacher Appreciation Week is celebrated the first week of May.*

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks #ThankATeacher

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Don't have a plan yet for summer? Explore internships or volunteer opportunities in your community. Explore your community to discover where you might be able to help.

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Your hard work has paid off! Congratulations to all our GEAR UP graduates, and best of luck in the next steps of your lives. We are always here to support you.

12th Grade Students and Families

#GEARUPworks

## June: Summer Engagement

Get involved this summer by starting a new hobby, visiting college campuses, or volunteering! Talk local entrepreneurs & businesses who could use a helping hand. Volunteering can boost your application for scholarships, college admissions, jobs, & more!

Students, Families

#GEARUPworks

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Headed to college? Make sure you complete forms by their deadlines. This may include accepting financial aid, signing up for orientation, or registering for classes. Keep checking e-mail all summer long for important information!

12th Grade Graduates and Families

#GEARUPworks

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Enjoy the break from school: spend quality time with family and friends, read a good book, try something new, and don't forget to wear sunscreen!

Students, Families, Educators

#GEARUPworks

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Don't let summer derail your college plans. Get organized now and put important dates on your calendar. Ask for help if questions or issues come up – GEAR UP is here to help.

12th Grade Graduates and Families

#GEARUPworks

## July: All Things GEAR UP

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) helps students from underserved communities prepare for & succeed beyond high school. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the program serves students across the country.

See [edpartnerships.org/about-gear-up](https://edpartnerships.org/about-gear-up) for more information

Students, Families, Educators, Congress

#GEARUPworks

Support for GEAR UP students goes beyond graduation. GEAR UP offers alumni networks at the state and national level. Connect with fellow GEAR UP alums and grow your support system through the GEAR UP Alumni Association.

See [gearupalumni.org](https://gearupalumni.org) for more information

12th Grade Graduates, College Students

#GEARUPworks

The National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP) supports GEAR UP programs across the country. They provide advocacy and professional development, including the NCCEP/GEAR UP Annual Conference each July. Here programs celebrate success, learn from the country's best educational experts, and share their best practices in supporting student success. 150 students also participate in the Youth Leadership Summit, bringing new skills and knowledge back to their communities.

Students, Families, Educators

#GEARUPworks #GUcon

What makes GEAR UP great? The people. The inspiring stories of students, families, community partners, and GEAR UP professionals are highlighted each year during the GEAR UP Leadership Awards.

Announced each year at the Annual Conference in mid-July. See [edpartnerships.org/leadership-awards](https://edpartnerships.org/leadership-awards) for current and previous winners.

Students, Families, Educators, Congress

#GEARUPworks

## August: Get Prepared

Staying organized is key to staying on track for life after high school. Know when to submit college applications, to apply for FAFSA, know financial aid awards, to pay tuition deposits, & more.

12th Grade Students

#GEARUPworks

Hoping to increase your GPA, add new extracurricular activities to your resume, or obtain a part-time job? Now's a good time to revisit the goals you have set for yourself. Share your goals with others to help you stay accountable and remember to keep your goals S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based).

Students

#GEARUPworks

Try to start working on your college application essays as soon as possible! This gives you more time to brainstorm, edit, get feedback, and make changes. Using the Common App? You can look at their essay prompts now so there won't be any surprises.

*Common App essay prompts are available at [commonapp.org](https://www.commonapp.org)*

12th Grade Students

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First day of college? You got this! The first day of class means receiving your course syllabus. Read it carefully, ask questions, and meet with your professors during office hours.

College Students

#GEARUPworks