

DIVISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS AND P-20 INITIATIVES  
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

*Year in Review*

**2010**



*Helping West Virginia's students*

**PURSUE AND ACHIEVE**

*education and training beyond high school*

THE ENTIRE SENIOR CLASS AT BURCH HIGH SCHOOL IN MINGO COUNTY APPLIED TO COLLEGE DURING WEST VIRGINIA GEAR UP'S INAUGURAL "COLLEGE APPLICATION WEEK."





GEAR  
We Applied  
UP

cfiv.com  
Plan, apply and pay for college.





## ABOUT THE DIVISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS AND P-20 INITIATIVES

The Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives strives, through a series of projects, to facilitate and create a statewide culture that values education and actively cultivates the advanced academic achievement of all citizens, regardless of age or income. The division coordinates several college access and completion initiatives, including:

- ***The College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV)***: a college access and awareness outreach initiative aimed at helping students and families learn how to plan, apply, and pay for college. CFWV provides a one-stop college and career planning website, [cfwv.com](http://cfwv.com), which features information about all of the state's colleges, as well as state and federal financial aid programs, and career and degree programs.
- ***West Virginia GEAR UP***: a federally funded, six-year grant program aimed at increasing college-going rates among students in ten high-need counties. West Virginia GEAR UP provides academic preparation and college readiness services to approximately 5,500 students each year.
- ***College Access Challenge Grant Program***: a federally funded five-year grant program aimed at increasing the educational attainment rates of all citizens, particularly those from high-need areas. The College Access Challenge Grant program supports the development and maintenance of the state's college access web portal, [cfwv.com](http://cfwv.com), and provides additional resources to assist in the CFWV outreach initiative.
- ***College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup>***: a one-day financial aid event designed to offer students and families the opportunity to receive free help in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> workshops are held at approximately 20 locations across the state. The program is funded by a grant from the Lumina Foundation for Education.

Additionally, the division supports the work of the Commission's Division of Financial Aid in informing students of the availability of financial aid, and the efforts of various divisions working toward helping adult students complete college degrees. The division works closely with the West Virginia Department of Education, the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education, and various other educational organizations and college access providers to promote the development of seamless, lifelong learning systems.

*Top: In June 2010, ninth grade students in the West Virginia GEAR UP program attended "GEAR UP U!"; a four-day summer academy held on the campus of Concord University.*

“ [GEAR UP] has prepared me for what lies ahead.  
Without this help, I would have been  
completely unprepared. ”

“ Having someone right by my side to walk me  
through the process made [applying to college]  
a lot easier and a lot less stressful. ”

*- 12th grade students, Westside High School in Wyoming County*

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*Below: Students at Tug Valley High School participated in an entertaining (and informative) ACT preparation class.*



“ BY INCREASING ACCESS TO EDUCATION, WE CAN DECREASE ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, ENCOURAGE GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS, AND PUT OUR STATE ON THE ROAD TO A MORE PROSPEROUS TOMORROW. ”



## COLLEGE ACCESS IS THE KEY TO GREATER EQUALITY

Brian Noland, Ph.D.  
Chancellor,  
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Our state’s public colleges and universities are committed to imparting opportunities for the social and economic advancement of the state’s citizens by increasing access to higher education for all West Virginians. Fulfillment of this responsibility supports the economic development of our communities and encourages the democratic principals of equal opportunity. For an individual, achieving a college degree is a critical step in obtaining greater social mobility, overcoming socioeconomic barriers, and ensuring a prosperous future. For our state, higher education offers a means toward creating a more engaged, economically sustainable, and innovative citizenry.

Each of us has a stake in developing a statewide culture that values education and encourages the pursuit of advanced learning. This past year, the Commission created the Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives. This division has been charged with developing more seamless educational support systems for our students and fueling a college-going culture across our state. The division is working to unite college access providers, PK-12 administrators and staff members, and higher education faculty and staff to build a comprehensive student support network and implement a variety of college access outreach and awareness programs.

Such collaboration and focus are absolute necessities if we are to respond to the needs of our citizens and increase the rates of student success. For many students, leaving home to attend college is a high-risk endeavor, both financially and emotionally. We must take every step to ensure that risk pays off by better preparing our students — academically and culturally — to succeed in college by implementing stronger support systems to guide them along the way.

The State of West Virginia has made great strides toward increasing accessibility and facilitating transitions from secondary to postsecondary education. Last fall, we launched the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV), a comprehensive online portal designed to help students and families in the state plan, apply, and pay for education and training beyond high school. CFWV presents an interactive website that streamlines the college readiness process by consolidating previously decentralized resources and allowing students of all ages to create personalized college and career planning portfolios.

These investments can yield significant dividends for our citizens and our communities. By increasing access to education, we can decrease economic inequality, encourage global competitiveness, and put our state on the road to a more prosperous tomorrow. As we move forward, we must all pursue the goal of helping more students receive a college diploma. Their achievements will lead to greater opportunities and a more promising future for all of West Virginia.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adam S. Green, Ed.D.

Director,

Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives

The past year has been characterized by strategic growth that has allowed us to expand the college access and student success movement on a statewide scale. What started as a single initiative targeting a few high-need communities through our administration of a federal GEAR UP grant has become a comprehensive college and career readiness strategy that touches the lives of students and families in all corners of West Virginia.

We began 2010 by hosting a spring College Access and Student Success Summit aimed at bridging gaps among elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education systems in order to encourage the development of a cradle-to-career approach to educating our students. More than 300 individuals representing PK-12 education systems, higher education systems, community organizations, and career-development agencies attended the event, which focused on helping each participant develop a personal action statement to guide their work in advancing the educational attainment of our students. Little did I know at the time that this event would be so telling of the progress we would achieve in 2010.

In the past year, we have made tremendous strides in fueling greater collaboration and building a college-going culture in our communities. We have joined forces with members of the West Virginia Department of Education to both tackle the high school dropout issue that plagues our state and further integrate college-readiness activities and resources within our PK-12 school system. We have secured the resources to allow every public two-year college in West Virginia to offer an online application through [cfwv.com](http://cfwv.com). And we have greatly expanded our efforts to provide information about the college-going process to students and families throughout the state through the continued development of [cfwv.com](http://cfwv.com) and expansion of our outreach efforts, including coordinating a pilot “College Application Week” initiative and a statewide outreach campaign aimed at helping adults return to the classroom to earn a college degree.

Much of this has been made possible due to increased internal collaboration, as we frequently engage our colleagues at the Commission in order to support our division’s efforts, and we do our best to return the favor by lending our expertise to the projects they initiate. The adult learner campaign, for example, was the result of a partnership amongst our staff, the Division of Academic Affairs, the Division of Policy and Planning, and a task force made up of administrators, faculty, and counselors at our higher education institutions.

These efforts have begun to pay off. We have seen a significant increase in the number of students and families utilizing the [cfwv.com](http://cfwv.com) website, and surveys within our GEAR UP communities indicate that students and their families possess a greater awareness of their options for college — and what it takes to get there. As we continue to build momentum for this movement, I am confident that we will see continued growth and development among our students in 2011 and beyond.



## 2010 HIGHLIGHTS

### FEBRUARY 2010

***West Virginia GEAR UP Incentive Award:*** The West Virginia GEAR UP program launched its second GEAR UP Incentive Award program, which provides students graduating from a West Virginia GEAR UP high school with a one-time financial aid award to help offset the costs of attending college. More than \$600,000 was awarded to 515 applicants in the class of 2010.

### APRIL 2010

***Governor's Honors Symposium for West Virginia GEAR UP Graduates:*** West Virginia GEAR UP held the second annual "Governor's Honors Symposium for West Virginia GEAR UP Graduates," an awards ceremony to honor the accomplishments of the program's high school seniors and encourage them to pursue education and training beyond high school. The event was held on April 17th in Charleston.

In addition to the ceremony, the event featured a series of college awareness interventions, including a college fair, a mobile financial aid lab and motivational presentations from Gayle C. Manchin, who was then First Lady, and Dr. Brian Noland, Chancellor of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. Additionally, the Governor declared the day of the event to be "West Virginia GEAR UP Day" in the state of West Virginia. Nearly 200 students and 300 parents attended.

***College Access and Student Success Summit:*** The Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives partnered with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission's P-20 Collaborative Task Force to coordinate the state's first College Access and Student Success Summit. The one-day event focused on encouraging collaboration among the state's education and workforce systems to build a more seamless, cradle-to-career educational pipeline for West Virginia's students.

Approximately 300 individuals participated in the event, including PK-12 educators, counselors and administrators; higher education faculty, counselors and administrators; community members; college access providers; and workforce counselors. The inaugural event has spurred a partnership between the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and the West Virginia Department of Education, and the two agencies plan to co-sponsor a second summit in August of 2011.

**Family College Day:** West Virginia GEAR UP hosted a Family College Day on the campus of Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College, one of the program's three college partners. The one-day event provided families with the opportunity to explore the college's campus, participate in various academic and college-awareness workshops, and learn more about career options. More than 300 individuals attended the event.

## MAY 2010

**RBA Today Marketing and Outreach Campaign:** The Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives supported the efforts of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission's Adult Learner Task Force by developing and launching a college access marketing campaign aimed at encouraging adults to return to college through the recently enhanced Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) program.

The campaign, which continued through September, incorporated radio, newspaper and online advertisements. Additionally, a direct mail postcard outlining the benefits of the RBA program was sent to adults living in West Virginia who had completed 60 college credit hours or more but stopped short of earning a degree. Media kits were also developed, which allowed individual institutions offering the RBA degree option to supplement the division's outreach strategies by placing ads consistent with the statewide campaign within their own target regions.

**National Governors Association Dropout Prevention Planning Grant Program:** The Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives collaborated with the Governor's Office, the West Virginia Department of Education, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and others to audit the state's dropout prevention programs and develop a comprehensive statewide plan to address the dropout problem among secondary education students.

*Top left: More than 300 students and family members attended Family College Day at Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College, which featured academic workshops, such as engineering.*

*Below: Students at "GEAR UP U!" participated in elective courses, such as forensics.*



## JUNE 2010

***“GEAR UP U!” Summer Academy:*** West Virginia GEAR UP hosted its first summer academy for members of the program’s student cohort (the class of 2014). The four-day academy was hosted on the campus of Concord University, one of West Virginia GEAR UP’s three college partners. Seventy-nine students graduated from the academy, which focused on preparing students for the transition from middle school to high school. Students participated in core classes — English, math and science — and elective classes, such as health sciences, communications, engineering, music and business.

Participants also attended workshops aimed at building study and time management skills, exploring career options and learning more about cfwv.com. College students led nightly mentoring sessions, which allowed GEAR UP students to learn more about life on campus and the challenges and opportunities of pursuing a college degree through the viewpoints of their near-peer mentors.

## JULY 2010

***GEAR UP Classroom Enhancements and Academic Enrichment Services:*** West Virginia GEAR UP collaborated with local education agencies in the program’s service area to identify and address schools’ needs for classroom enhancements and academic enrichment programs. The program funded classroom technology upgrades, such as interactive white boards, course recovery software, computer labs, and academic enrichment programs, such as dual-credit courses and ACT preparation classes.

## AUGUST 2010

***West Virginia State Fair:*** The Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives coordinated a college access outreach event at the West Virginia State Fair. Staff members spent ten days at the fair, providing information about the state’s financial aid programs and the resources available on cfwv.com. More than 600 individuals received information about college as a result of the initiative.

*Below: Students attending “GEAR UP U!” were required to participate in core courses, such as mathematics.*

*Right: Students graduating from GEAR UP high schools participated in the Governor’s Honors Symposium for GEAR UP Graduates, which featured an awards ceremony and a college fair.*



**Higher Education Readiness Officers (HEROs):** West Virginia GEAR UP launched a peer-to-peer outreach program in GEAR UP high schools. Students, particularly those in the GEAR UP cohort, are encouraged to become HEROs, or Higher Education Readiness Officers. The HEROs in each school form a “league,” whose mission is to help all students in their community attend and succeed in college.

HEROs assist West Virginia GEAR UP site coordinators in organizing and promoting GEAR UP activities and services, and they plan and coordinate several of their own outreach initiatives each year, including a teacher appreciation day and a one-day community-focused College Access Summit. The HEROs also provide feedback and direction for the statewide College Foundation of West Virginia marketing campaign and offer input regarding GEAR UP activities. They are tasked with mobilizing their fellow students and their parents to build a college-going culture in their schools and communities. One hundred and eighty-four students have registered as HEROs and 16 of West Virginia GEAR UP’s 17 service schools currently have active leagues.

**Financial Aid 101:** The Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives worked with the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission’s Division of Financial Aid to develop a “Financial Aid 101” planning guide. More than 28,000 of the guides were disseminated to students and parents during the fall of 2010. The guide also promotes the resources available on cfwv.com.

## SEPTEMBER 2010

**West Virginia GEAR UP Fall Planning Workshop:** West Virginia GEAR UP coordinated the program’s annual “Fall Planning Workshop,” a three-day conference aimed at helping the program’s site coordinators better integrate the program’s initiatives within the framework of their schools. Nearly 100 individuals participated in the workshop, including principals, counselors, teachers, and mentors from each of the 17 schools the program serves.

**College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) Fall Campaign:** The Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives launched the fall phase of the initiative’s statewide college access marketing campaign. The campaign features television, radio, web, and print advertisements, along with billboards, event sponsorships, in-theater advertising promotions, and social media strategies.



**2010 College Fair Tour:** Staff members from the Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives participated in the annual West Virginia College Fair Tour, which provides opportunities for public high schools in the state to participate in a local college fair. Staff members provided information about the state's financial aid programs and the resources available on cfwv.com to students at more than 130 high schools. The tour began in September and continued through November.

**West Virginia GEAR UP Mentor Program:** West Virginia GEAR UP launched a comprehensive mentor program in 14 of the program's service schools. The program, which was developed by the Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives' regional GEAR UP coordinators, has enabled site-level coordinators to build successful mentor programs in their schools. Mentors now utilize pre-packaged session guides, which incorporate college and career planning activities within self-development exercises. The program has allowed mentors to focus their energies on building more meaningful relationships with students, and incorporates an evaluation process, which will provide significant and relevant data that can be used to improve the service as it is implemented.

## OCTOBER 2010

**College Foundation of West Virginia Training Workshops:** The Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives began offering training workshops across the state. The workshops are designed to help educators — particularly secondary education counselors — utilize cfwv.com and other college-planning resources in their work with students. The workshops continued throughout the fall and were held at regional locations, including Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) offices and college campuses across West Virginia.

**Admissions 101:** The Division of Student Success developed "Admissions 101," a planning guide designed to help students and families navigate the college application process. More than 12,000 of the guides, which also feature information regarding cfwv.com, have been disseminated.

## NOVEMBER 2010

**College Application Week Pilot Program:** The West Virginia GEAR UP program collaborated with the Fairmont State GEAR UP partnership grant program to develop a pilot College Application Week initiative. College Application Week was held November 15 through 20 in both West Virginia GEAR UP's and Fairmont State GEAR UP's service regions. During the week, schools organized a variety of college awareness activities, including "college spirit days," and "ask me about college," events that encouraged students to talk to their teachers about their college experience. Students were provided lab time to explore postsecondary institutions on cfwv.com and to complete college applications. More than 1,500 students submitted a college application and completed the college application week questionnaire as a result of the event; 605 of the students who participated are part of the Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives' West Virginia GEAR UP program.

**College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> Outreach Campaign:** In partnership with the West Virginia Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel, the Commission's Division of Financial Aid, and the higher education financial aid community, the Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives launched an outreach campaign aimed at building community involvement and support for the state's College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> program. College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> is a one-day event that provides students and families with the opportunity to receive free, one-on-one help completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> will be held at 18 locations across the state on February 13, 2011. A marketing campaign to promote the event to students and families will begin in early January 2011.

*Right: Students attending "GEAR UP U!" participated in hands-on science activities to study trajectories, wind force and gravity.*





# WEST VIRGINIA GEAR UP

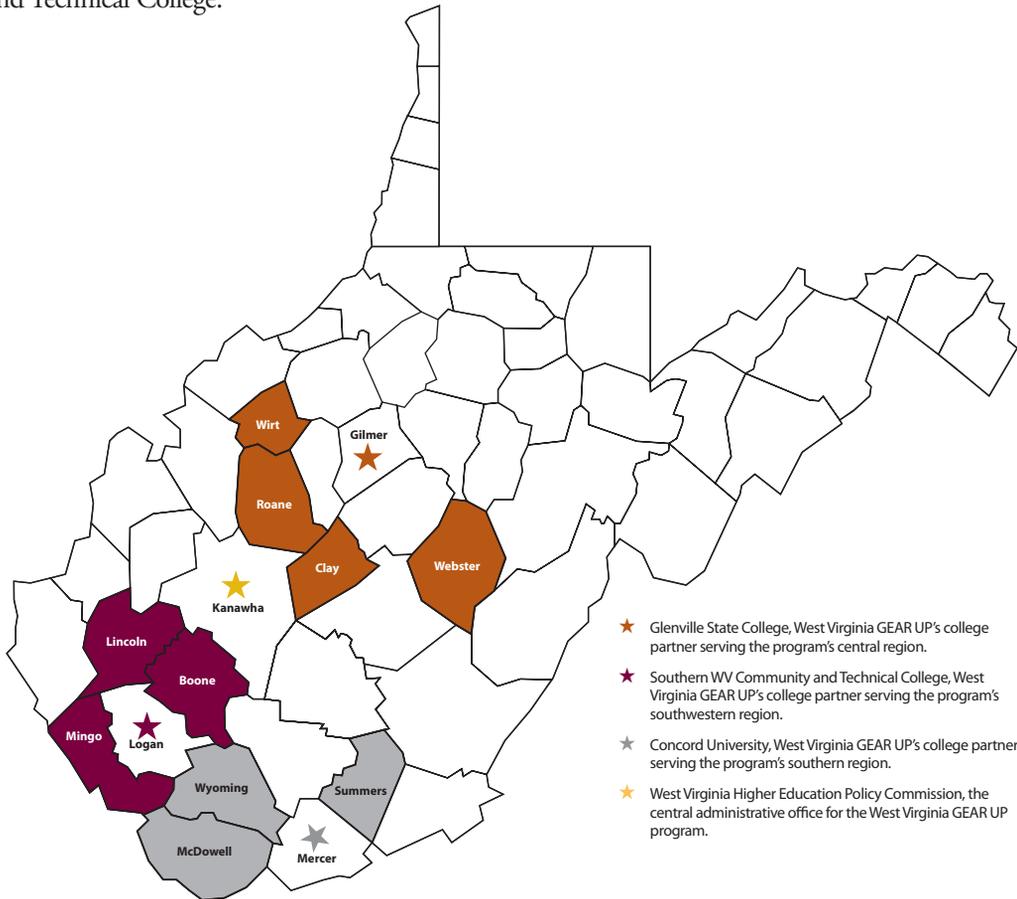
## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

West Virginia GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a federally funded grant program aimed at increasing the academic preparation and college readiness of students within ten under-served counties in West Virginia. The program is funded by a six-year, \$18 million federal grant awarded in 2008 to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission by the United States Department of Education.

The program operates within 17 schools and provides college access services to a cohort (the class of 2014), and a priority group (students in the 11th and 12th grades). West Virginia GEAR UP provides college-planning and academic enrichment services to approximately 5,500 students each year. The program is projected to serve more than 13,000 students over the life of the grant.

## SERVICE AREA

During the 2009-10 academic year, the West Virginia GEAR UP program operated within 49 middle and high schools. During the 2010-11 academic year, the program served 17 high schools. West Virginia GEAR UP’s service counties include Boone, Clay, Lincoln, McDowell, Mingo, Roane, Summers, Webster, Wirt, and Wyoming. The program collaborates with three college partners: Concord University, Glenville State College, and Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College.



Left: Seventy-nine students graduated from “GEAR UP U!”, a four-day summer academy held on the campus of Concord University.

## 2010 PROGRAM OUTCOMES

*At the site level, West Virginia GEAR UP has provided additional opportunities for students, parents, and educators that may not otherwise have been afforded, including:*

***College Awareness Interventions:*** West Virginia GEAR UP provides funding for college awareness activities, such as parent and family nights and college tours. Campus visits have been particularly successful. During the 2009-10 academic year, 2,384 students visited a college campus as a result of the GEAR UP program.<sup>1</sup>

***Parent and Family Events:*** West Virginia GEAR UP emphasizes parent and family involvement as a key component of increasing the educational attainment rates of students. GEAR UP coordinates and funds family college and financial aid awareness nights throughout the year and encourages parents to work with their students to build a college plan by creating a parent account on cfwv.com. In 2010, West Virginia GEAR UP also sponsored family-engagement workshops aimed at helping educators build family-friendly cultures within their schools.

Early results of these initiatives are promising. At the program's start in 2008, only five percent of parents of West Virginia GEAR UP's cohort students reported having spoken with someone at their school about financial aid for college. By the end of the program's second reporting year, 27 percent of parents reported having spoken with someone at the school about these issues — an increase of 440 percent over the baseline. Similarly, only four percent of parents of the cohort class reported speaking to someone from their child's school about college entrance requirements at the program's start, and that number has increased to 22 percent, a 450 percent increase.<sup>2</sup>

***Classroom Enhancements and Technology Upgrades:*** West Virginia GEAR UP has funded numerous technology upgrades, including smart boards, computer labs, and learning software. In 2010, the program funded two projects yielding particularly high impacts:

In Wirt County High School, the program funded the purchase of netbook computers for every 9th grade student (the West Virginia GEAR UP cohort) — a contribution that allowed the school to achieve a one-to-one, computer-to-student ratio. The school has adapted their curriculum to incorporate a greater focus on digital learning, and each student is now issued a netbook along with their standard textbooks. Additionally, the school has transitioned to using e-books in many of their classes.

In McDowell County, administrators have struggled for several years to offer world language classes due to a shortage of teachers. To address this need, West Virginia GEAR UP funded a distance-learning lab that has allowed the county to offer a greater variety of world language classes, many at advanced levels.

***Tutoring and Academic Enrichment:*** West Virginia GEAR UP aims to increase the academic preparation of students in order to prepare them to succeed in postsecondary education. To achieve that goal, the program has consistently provided funding and resources for services such as ACT preparation classes and credit recovery courses. West Virginia GEAR UP has also funded dual credit courses, typically in the subjects of math and English, offered through Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College, one of the program's three college partners. Additionally, every West Virginia GEAR UP school provides tutoring services to students in the 2014 cohort. During the 2009-10 academic year, 3,173 students participated in tutoring or homework assistance at an average of 27.28 hours per participant.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Reporting period: August 15, 2009 through July 31, 2010; Source: West Virginia GEAR UP Participation Summary Reports - College Visit/College Student Shadowing Service Category

2 Reporting period: March 31, 2009 through March 15, 2010; Source: West Virginia GEAR UP Annual Performance Report - (2010)

3 Reporting period: August 15, 2009 through July 31, 2010; Source: West Virginia GEAR UP Participation Summary Reports - Tutoring/Homework Assistance Category

**Professional Development:** To ensure sustainability of the college-readiness initiative, West Virginia GEAR UP funds professional development activities for educators at every GEAR UP school each year. During the 2009-10 academic year, the program funded several professional development workshops aimed at helping educators better prepare their middle school students for the transition to high school. In Summers and Boone counties, the program funded the professional development needed to allow middle school and high school teachers to collaborate and develop full-scale ninth grade transition programs. West Virginia GEAR UP also has funded training workshops designed to help GEAR UP counselors utilize cfwv.com. During the 2009-10 academic year, 667 educators received professional development training as a result of the GEAR UP program.<sup>1</sup>

**2,384** students visited a college campus during the 2009-10 academic year as a result of the West Virginia GEAR UP program.

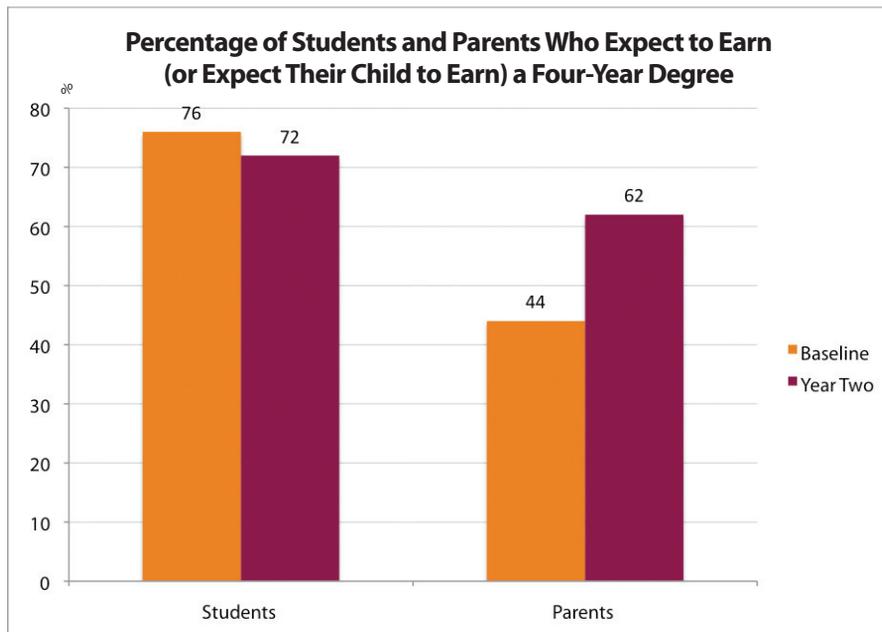
<sup>1</sup> Reporting period: August 15, 2009 through July 31, 2010; Source: West Virginia GEAR UP Participation Summary Reports - Professional Development Service Category

*Below: Students from Webster County visited Glenville State College to attend a performance by the Glenville State Percussion Ensemble and to tour the campus.*



West Virginia GEAR UP's efforts have yielded significant results for the students, families, educators, and communities the program serves. Highlights include:

**A positive shift in parents' aspirations for their children:** At the program's start, 76 percent of students in the West Virginia GEAR UP cohort indicated that they expected to complete a four-year college degree or higher, but only 44 percent of cohort parents indicated that they thought their student would achieve a bachelor's degree or more. Midway through the program's second year, those numbers had shifted dramatically. Surveys of GEAR UP parents and students during the 2009-10 academic year indicated that cohort parents now have higher expectations for their children; 62 percent now believe their student will complete a four-year degree program. During the same time period, cohort students' perceptions regarding their ability to complete college have declined slightly; down four percentage points as compared to the program's start.<sup>1</sup>



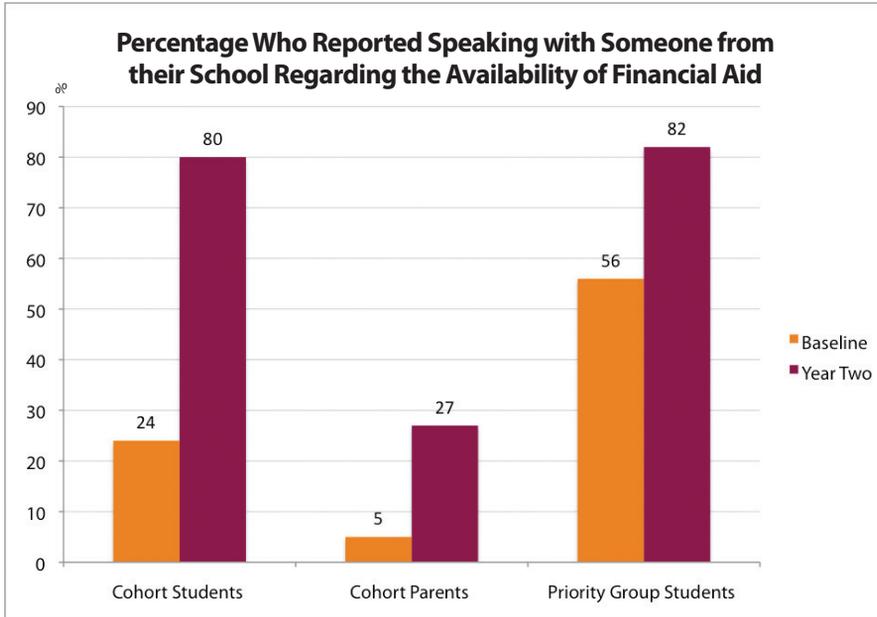
**Chart 1:** The percentage of cohort students and parents who expect to earn (or expect their child to earn) a four-year degree or more; comparing survey responses at the program's start to those collected during the project's second year of implementation.

<sup>1</sup> Sources: West Virginia GEAR UP Baseline Data Survey (2008); West Virginia GEAR UP Annual Program Survey (2009)

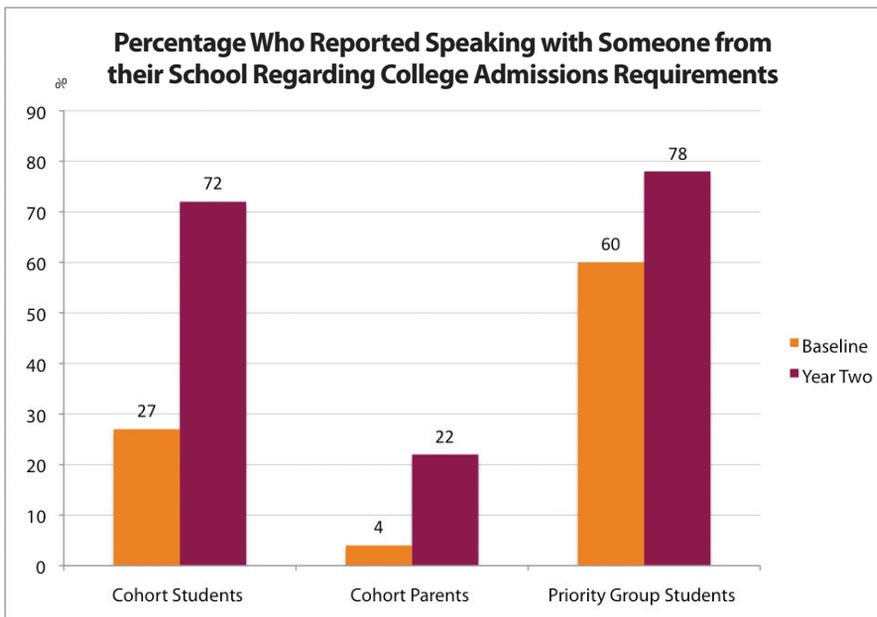
***We are so grateful to Glenville State College and to GEAR UP for organizing our [college visit]. For some of these young people, this is the first time the thought of college seemed like a reality. A department chair at Glenville took the time to talk to our students — who are still five years away from being potential college students. I was so impressed that he would do that for our kids.***

*- John Putnam, Principal (2009-10), Walton Elementary School, Roane County*

*A significant increase in the number of students and parents who report having spoken with someone from their school regarding college admissions requirements and the availability of financial aid:* In the program’s first year, only 24 percent of cohort students reported speaking to someone from their school about the availability of financial aid for college. The percentage increased substantially to 80 percent in its second year of implementation. Similarly, at the project’s start, only approximately one fourth of cohort students had spoken with someone from their school about college entrance requirements. By late 2009, however, almost three fourths of cohort students reported having a conversation with someone at their school regarding this topic. The number of priority group students and cohort parents reporting that they had spoken with someone from their school about college entrance requirements and financial aid for college also increased during this time period. <sup>1</sup>



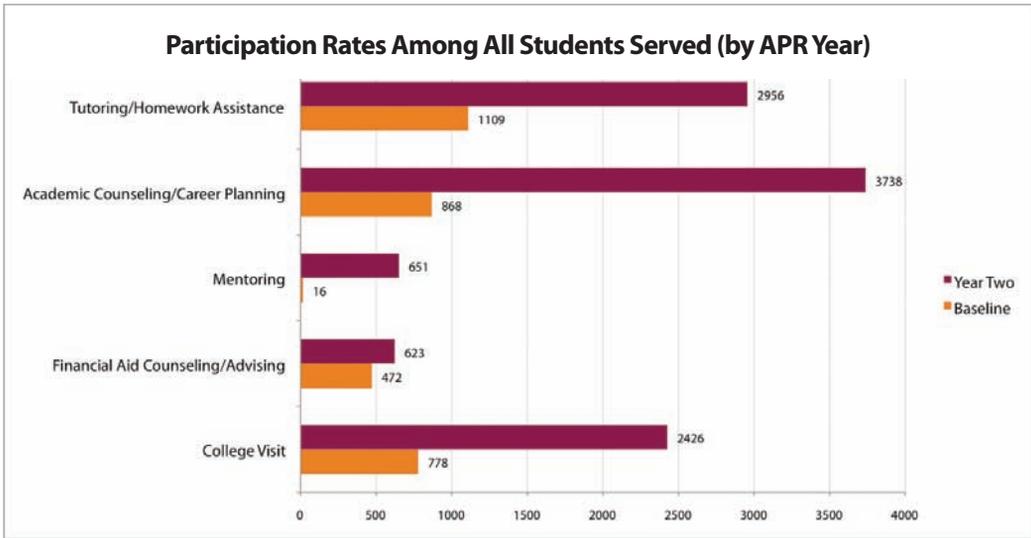
**Chart 2:** The percentage of students and parents who reported having spoken with someone from their school (or their child’s school) regarding the availability of financial aid; Comparison of the program’s first and second years of implementation, as reported on the program’s federal Annual Performance Report (APR). <sup>1</sup>



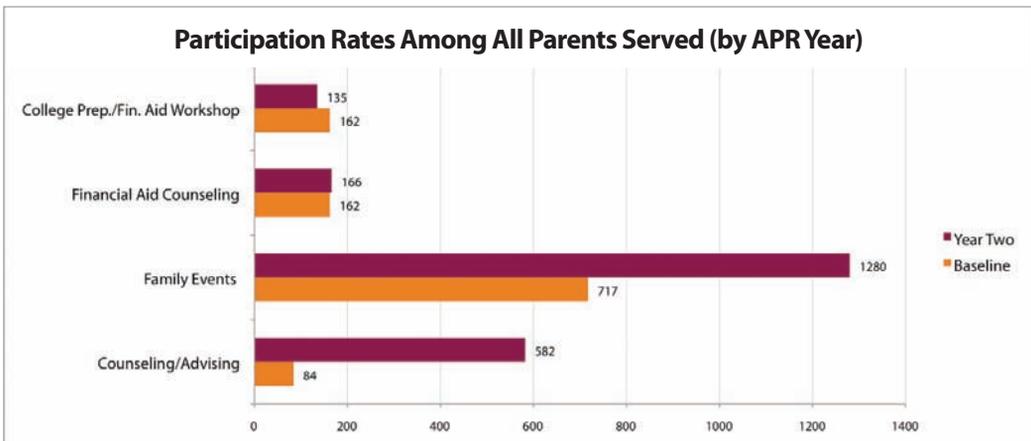
**Chart 3:** The percentage of students and parents who reported having spoken with someone from their school (or their child’s school) regarding college admissions requirements; Comparison of the program’s first and second years of implementation, as reported on the program’s federal Annual Performance Report (APR). <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sources: West Virginia GEAR UP Baseline Data Survey (2008); West Virginia GEAR UP Annual Program Survey (2009)

**Significant increases in program participation rates:** West Virginia GEAR UP services have been implemented with greater success in the program's second year, and activities and services are constant and ongoing. A summary of key services and participation rates is provided in Charts 4 and 5.<sup>1</sup>



**Chart 4:** Participants by service category, cohort and priority group student populations (aggregate); Comparison of the program's first and second years of implementation, as reported on the program's federal Annual Performance Report (APR).<sup>1</sup>

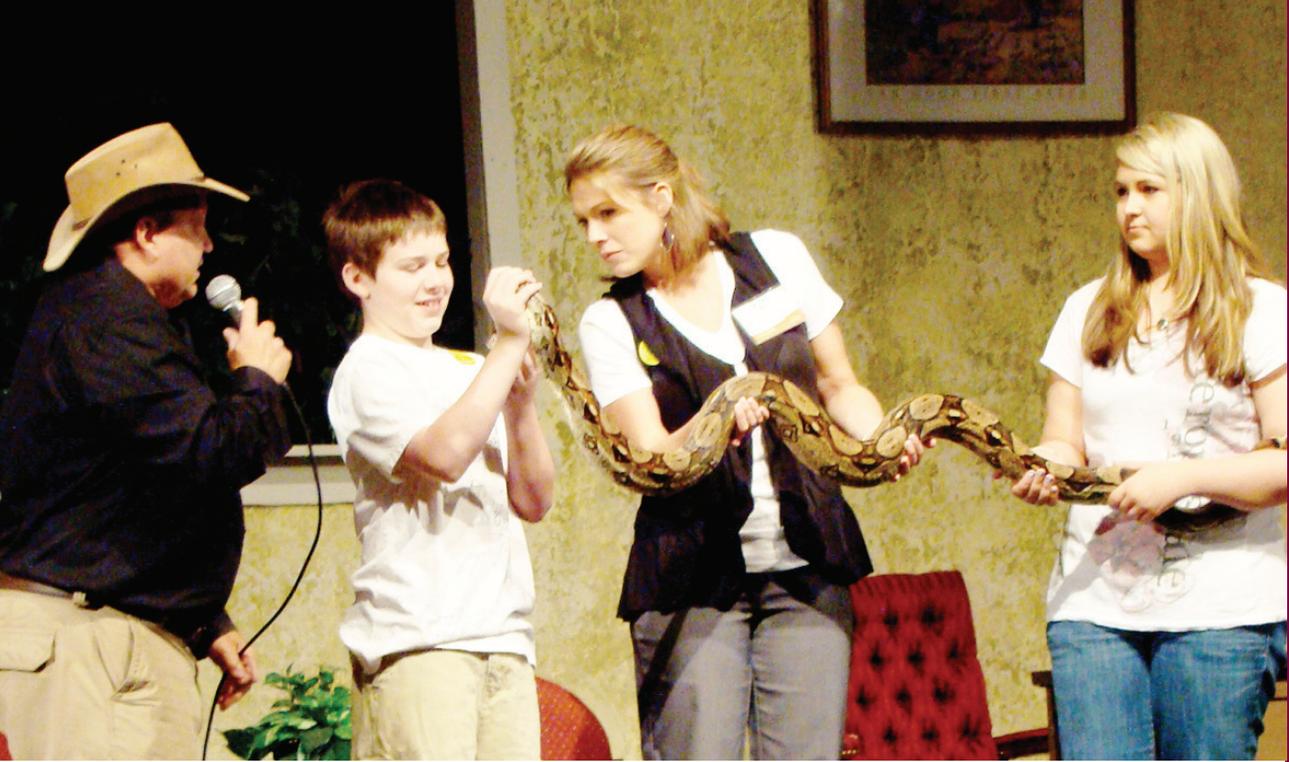


**Chart 5:** Participants by service category, parents of cohort and priority group student populations (aggregate); Comparison of the program's first and second years of implementation, as reported on the program's federal Annual Performance Report (APR).<sup>1-2</sup>

1 Reporting periods: July 15, 2008 through March 30, 2009, as compared to March 31, 2009 through March 15, 2010; Source: West Virginia GEAR UP Participation Summaries, (2008-10)

2 In the program's second year, the reporting criteria changed and information regarding parents' participation in financial aid awareness activities was split into two categories. In the first reporting year, this information was reported in a single category: workshops on college preparation/financial aid.





**Positive changes among students regarding their plans for college:** The majority of cohort students (62 percent) indicated that the West Virginia GEAR UP program helped them become more academically prepared. Only 14 percent “did not believe” that the program helped them academically and 22 percent “did not know” whether the program was helpful. Nearly half of the priority students surveyed felt the program increased their academic readiness. When questioned regarding their satisfaction with West Virginia GEAR UP services, the majority of students indicated that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the program’s services in all categories. Students were most satisfied with the campus tours the program provides and the campus tour/college visit was also judged to be the most beneficial service among students surveyed.

Many students also said they believed the GEAR UP program had a positive impact on their college plans. Thirty-two percent of cohort students said the program had caused them to change their plans for college, by helping them to decide:

- To go to a trade school, college, or university,
- To obtain more education than they had originally planned,
- To determine where they want to attend school, and/or
- To determine what they want to study in school.

Nearly 18 percent of priority group students said they had changed their plans in one of the ways outlined above as a result of the GEAR UP program.<sup>1</sup>

**1,280** parents participated in a GEAR UP family event during the program’s second year.

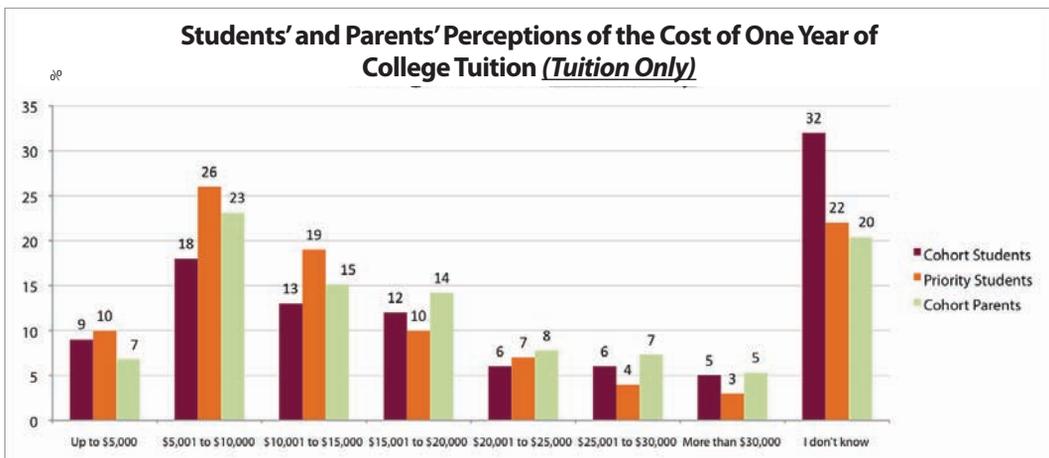
<sup>1</sup> Sources: West Virginia GEAR UP Baseline Data Survey (2008); West Virginia GEAR UP Annual Program Survey (2009)

*Left and Above: Families attending Family College Day at Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College were able to learn about reptiles, such as snakes and alligators, through experiences that were truly “hands on.” The animals were provided and cared for by Snakes Alive! an educational outreach organization.*

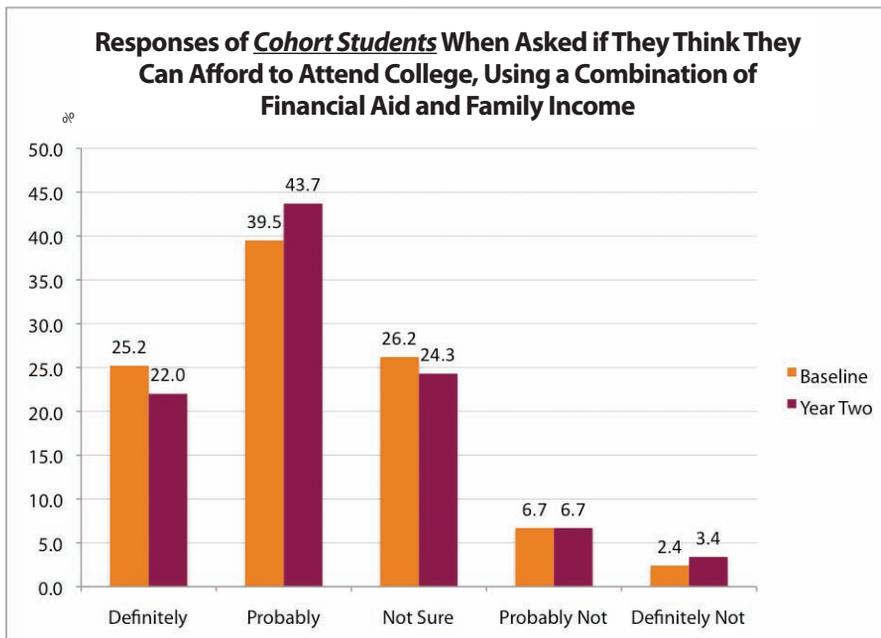
## CHALLENGES

Though West Virginia GEAR UP has demonstrated a high level of success, the project has not been without challenges, including:

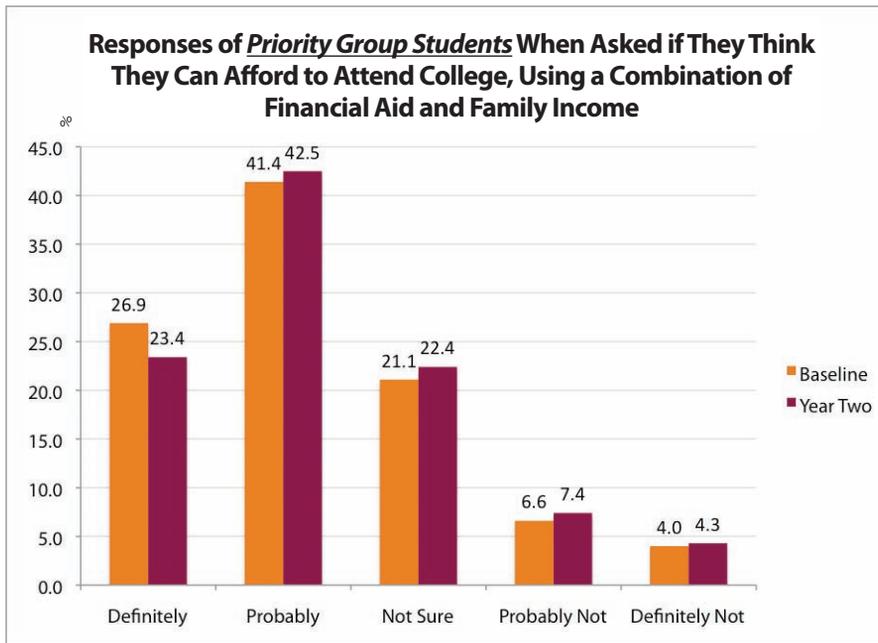
**Skewed perceptions of Costs and Affordability:** Students and parents continue to overestimate the cost to attend college, and the number of students who think they could “definitely afford college” has decreased since the program’s start.<sup>1</sup> To counter this trend, the GEAR UP program has strengthened its focus on providing informational resources regarding financial aid programs and college costs to parents and students. Additionally, the program will provide professional development sessions for GEAR UP counselors and site coordinators to provide these individuals with knowledge and resources to help them inform their students of the financial aid opportunities available.



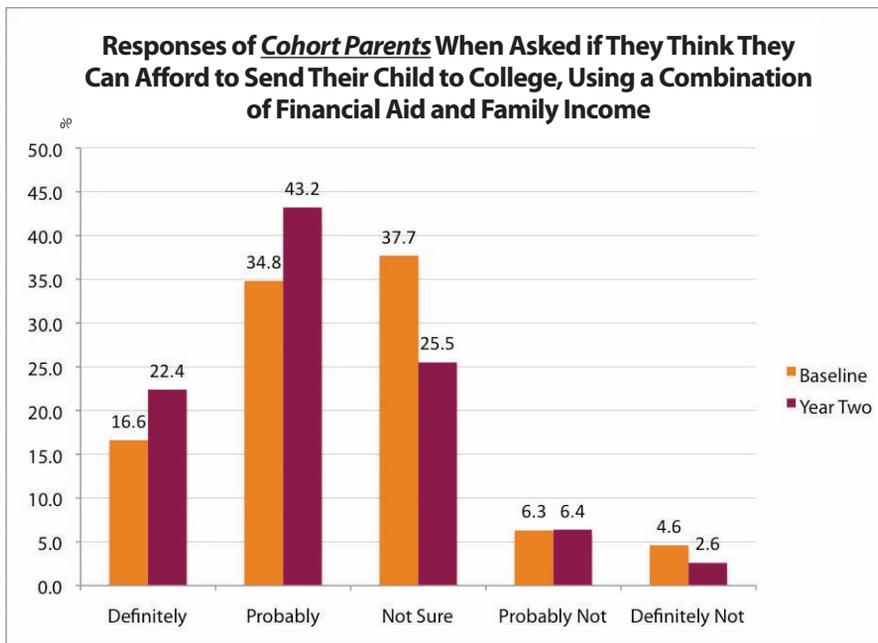
**Chart 6:** Students' and Parents' perceptions regarding how much it costs for one year of college tuition at a public college or university in West Virginia; 2009-10 school year. Note: survey respondents were asked specifically NOT to consider additional costs, such as housing, books, or supplies.<sup>1</sup>



**Chart 7:** The percentage of cohort students responding in each category when asked whether they thought they could afford to attend college using a combination of their family income and financial aid.<sup>1</sup>



**Chart 8:** The percentage of priority group students responding in each category when asked whether they thought they could afford to attend college using a combination of their family income and financial aid.<sup>1</sup>



**Chart 9:** The percentage of cohort parents responding in each category when asked whether they thought they could afford to send their child to college using a combination of their family income and financial aid.<sup>1</sup>

**Academic Achievement:** Cohort students earned a slightly lower overall grade point average in the program’s second year than in its first, and students’ GPAs in all four major content areas — English, mathematics, science, and social studies decreased slightly.<sup>2</sup> West Virginia GEAR UP is currently examining ways the program can help address these deficiencies and is hopeful that increased tutoring activity will reverse these trends in future years.

<sup>1</sup> Sources: West Virginia GEAR UP Baseline Data Survey (2008); West Virginia GEAR UP Annual Program Survey (2009)

<sup>2</sup> Source: County Boards of Education within the West Virginia GEAR UP program’s service area



**Transportation and Time Constraints:** Transportation and time constraints continue to serve as barriers to participation for after-school tutoring and mentor programs. Students frequently report that they are unable to participate due to lack of transportation, while others are committed to participating in other programs, such as sports, band, or after-school clubs.<sup>1</sup> When possible, GEAR UP coordinators have worked to provide these services before school or during school, such as during lunch periods or elective periods. This may improve in coming years, as many West Virginia schools are considering a return to a seven-period a day schedule, which would allow greater flexibility for schools to structure their schedules to offer class periods dedicated to ACT preparation, tutoring, or credit recovery.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: West Virginia GEAR UP Site Coordinator Focus Group Interviews (2010)

## ABOUT THE MEASURES AND REPORTS PROVIDED

West Virginia GEAR UP follows a rigorous evaluation plan, as outlined on the program's website at [www.wvgearup.org/research](http://www.wvgearup.org/research). The program conducts an annual survey among students and parents in order to measure the project's progress toward meeting its annual and long-term objectives. The program only surveys students who have been given permission by their parents to participate.

Due to discrepancies between the program's annual reporting period and its annual service period (the latter is aligned with the academic year, the former begins and ends in March of each year), data and measures presented in this report represent varying time frames. For this reason, reporting periods are frequently listed in the footnotes on each page. Much of the data regarding the GEAR UP program encompasses multiple academic years and multiple federal performance reporting years. This report is intended to provide a glimpse of the accomplishments achieved through the GEAR UP program as it relates to the work of the Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives during the 2010 traditional calendar year.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

West Virginia GEAR UP strives to be accessible to students, families, educators, and community members. Please feel free to contact program staff via any of the following methods:

 **(304) 558-0655**

 **[www.wvgearup.org](http://www.wvgearup.org)**

 **[gearupinfo@hepc.wvnet.edu](mailto:gearupinfo@hepc.wvnet.edu)**

 **[www.facebook.com/wvgearup](http://www.facebook.com/wvgearup)**

 **[@wvgearup](https://twitter.com/wvgearup)**

*Top Left: Staff members attended the 2010 West Virginia State Fair to provide information about college to students and families.*

*Middle Left: Teachers at Clay County High School decorated their doors in the theme of their alma mater.*

*Bottom Left: Students at "GEAR UP U!" participated in hands-on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) classes.*



*The College Foundation of West Virginia and West Virginia GEAR UP supported the efforts of Concord University's "McDowell County Initiative," which offered students and families in McDowell County the opportunity to learn more about college through various outreach events on campus and in the community. Above: Students from Mount View High School on the campus of Concord University.*

# COLLEGE ACCESS CHALLENGE GRANT

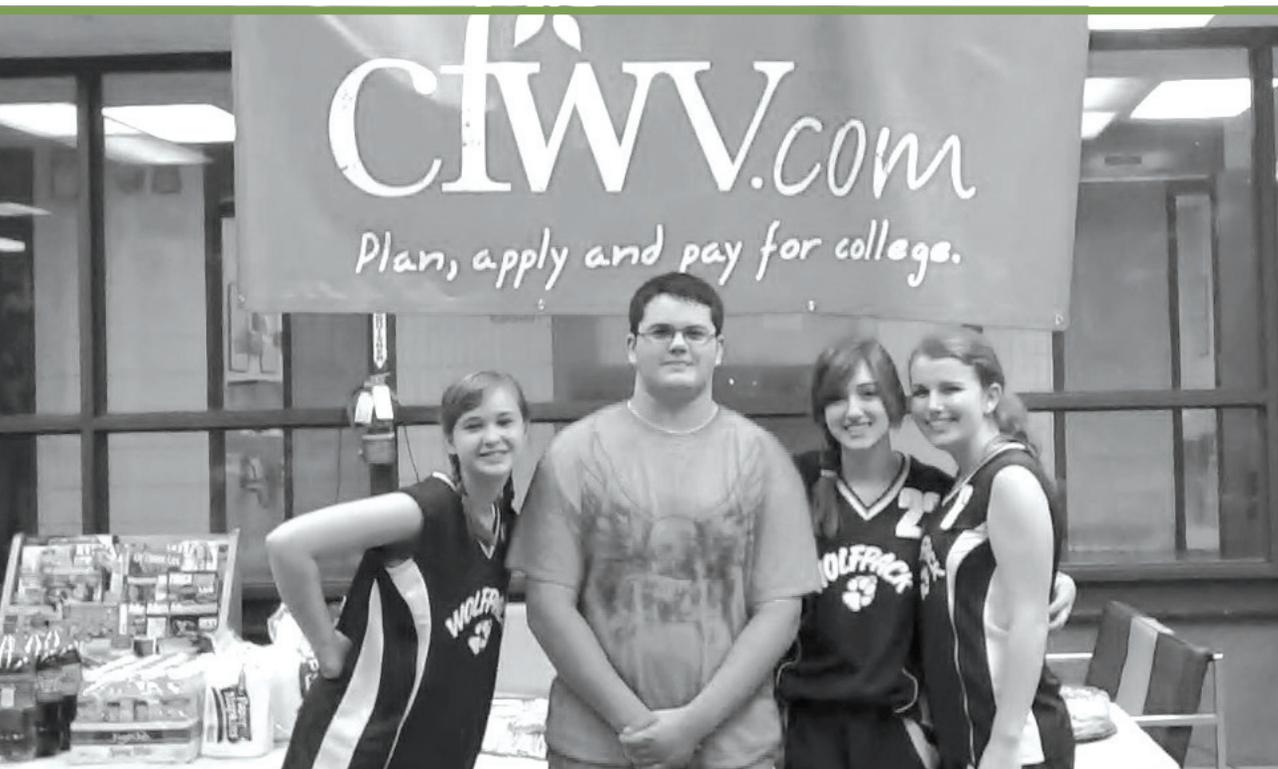
## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The College Access Challenge Grant program is a federally funded five-year grant program aimed at increasing the educational attainment rates of all citizens, particularly those from high-need areas. The College Access Challenge Grant program:

- supports the development and maintenance of the state's college access portal, [cfvv.com](http://cfvv.com);
- provides training and professional development opportunities for middle and high school counselors and other educators to aid them in integrating college and career-readiness activities within the secondary education system;
- fuels the development of sustainable community support programs through the creation of college and career planning curricula and kits that will enable community organizations to assist students and families in the college planning process;
- supports the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) outreach initiative by providing outreach services and developing college access informational tools and programs; and
- supports college completion initiatives, such as adult degree-completion programs and student transition programs.

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission's College Access Challenge Grant Program is funded through 2015. This is the second of two College Access Challenge Grants the Commission has received; the first grant was a two-year award, provided in 2008.

*To inform students and parents of the resources available on [cfvv.com](http://cfvv.com), the division sent a CFWV banner to each public high school in the state. Below: Students from Williamson High School in Mingo County show off their school's banner.*

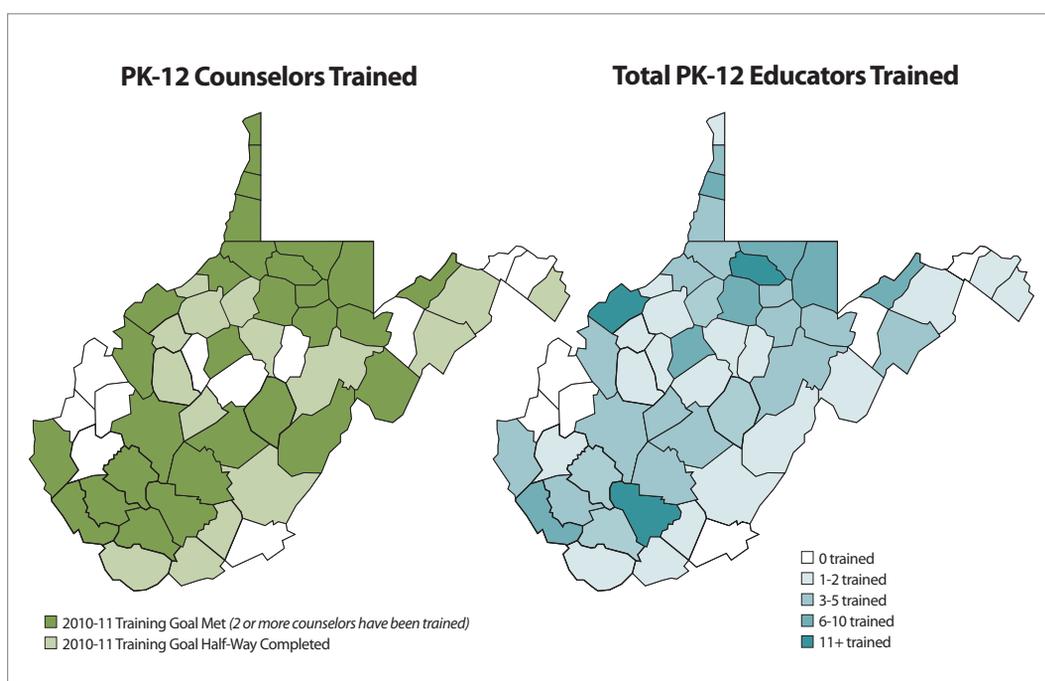


## 2010 PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) program expands on the outreach efforts of the College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV), a statewide public information and outreach campaign initially funded by a one-time appropriation by the Governor's Jobs Cabinet established under then Governor Joe Manchin III. The legislature's initial infusion of funds provided a solid foundation for CFWV, allowing the Commission to leverage federal monies to continue the work of this important college access and student success initiative.

Highlights of the outcomes achieved through the College Access Challenge Grant program and the CFWV initiative include:

**Counselor and Educator Training:** Since the site launched in October of 2009, more than 500 educators, counselors and community volunteers have received in-depth training on the use and application of the cfww.com portal; 266 have completed training this academic year.<sup>1</sup> The CACG program focuses particularly on training counselors with a goal of providing a half- or full-day training workshop to at least two counselors per county during the 2010-11 academic year. In the fall of 2010, 131 counselors representing 44 counties were trained. Chart 10 indicates those counties where program staff have successfully trained at least two counselors to utilize the cfww.com site and provides the number of counselors and other PK-12 educators who have been trained during the 2010-11 academic year.<sup>1</sup>



**Chart 10:** PK-12 counselors and other PK-12 educators by county who have been trained during the fall of 2010. Training workshops will continue through the spring and summer of 2011 in pursuit of the College Access Challenge Grant program's goal of training at minimum two PK-12 counselors per county during the 2010-11 academic year.

**Greater PK-12 Collaboration and Alignment:** Staff members from the Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives and the West Virginia Department of Education are working to align the LINKS college- and career-readiness curriculum (developed by the state's counseling system) to the resources on cfww.com. Addition of the "Learning Styles Inventory" tool added this year has aided this process; as such a tool is utilized on [careercruising.com](http://careercruising.com), the subscription-based online portal for which the original LINKS curriculum was designed.

**Additional Online College Applications:** CACG monies funded the development of online applications systems for eight community and technical colleges in West Virginia. Seven of these applications are still in the beta phase and are being tested by staff members at the institutions. Mountwest Community and Technical College staff members have completed testing and launched their institution's new application on [cfwv.com](http://cfwv.com).

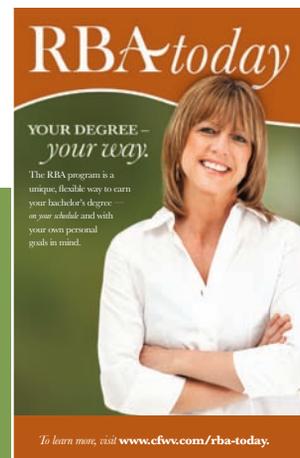
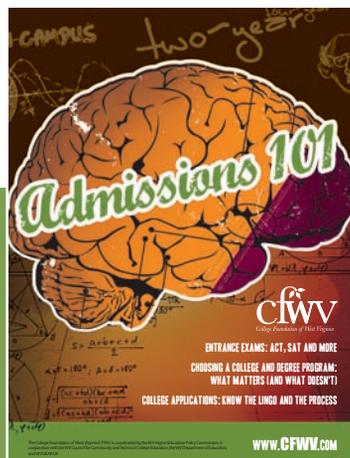
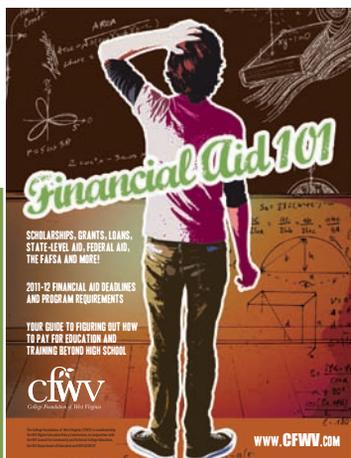
**Additional Outreach Materials and Tools:** CACG funds were used to develop and produce "Admissions 101," a step-by-step guide to understanding and navigating the college application process. These brochures were distributed statewide and were also included in toolkits for 37 schools participating in a pilot "College Application Week" program, a collaborative initiative developed by the West Virginia GEAR UP program and Fairmont State University's GEAR UP program. The guides complement the "Financial Aid 101" brochures developed by the Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives and the Commission's Division of Financial Aid.

"College 101" brochures are planned for development and distribution in the spring. "College 101" will focus on helping high school seniors and their families prepare for the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

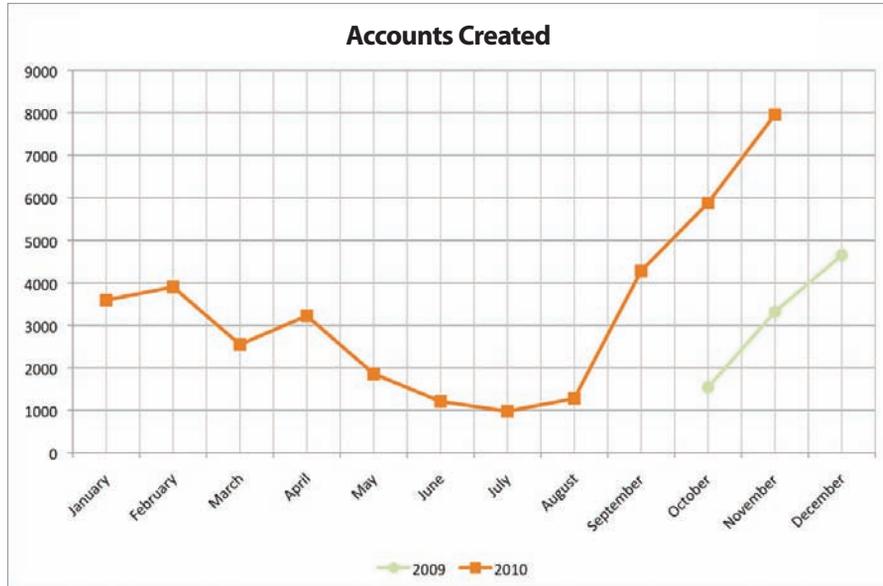
**College Access Marketing and Outreach Initiatives:** During the fall of 2010, staff members hosted outreach and informational displays at every college fair on the statewide College Fair Tour, reaching students, and sometimes parents, at more than 130 schools. CACG funds were used to pay for travel expenses and outreach materials utilized at these events. Additionally, staff participated in an outreach event at the 2010 West Virginia State Fair. More than 600 individuals received information during the fair and signed up to receive e-mail and other updates regarding financial aid, [cfwv.com](http://cfwv.com), and other college readiness initiatives.

2010 CACG funds are also being utilized to support the statewide CFVW marketing campaign initially funded by the Governor's Jobs Cabinet and the West Virginia State Legislature, and previous CACG funds (awarded in 2008) were utilized to expand the efforts of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission's summer 2010 adult learner outreach campaign, "RBA Today." The "RBA Today" campaign encouraged adults — particularly those who had previously earned 60 college credit hours or more — to return to college to complete their degrees through the state's recently enhanced Regents Bachelor of Arts (RBA) program.

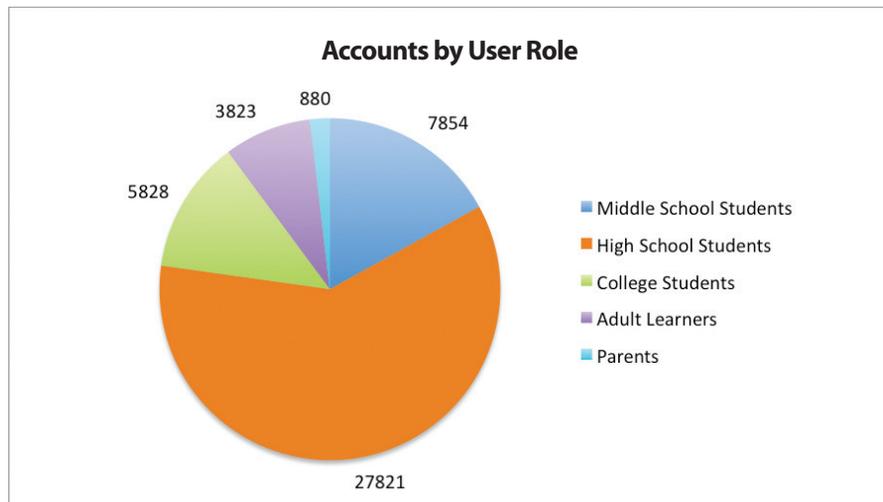
*Below: The division has launched a comprehensive public information campaign to help students and families learn more about the college-going process.*



**Utilization and Adoption:** Since the site's launch in early October 2009, more than 46,000<sup>1</sup> individuals have created accounts on cfwv.com, and nearly 21,000 applications have been submitted through the cfwv.com web portal.<sup>1</sup> Overall, use of the site's college-planning features has steadily increased during the fall 2010 marketing and outreach campaign. Chart 11 shows account activity by month. Chart 12 features accounts created disaggregated by target audience. Charts 13 through 15 provide a year-to-year comparison of utilization of the site's various features.

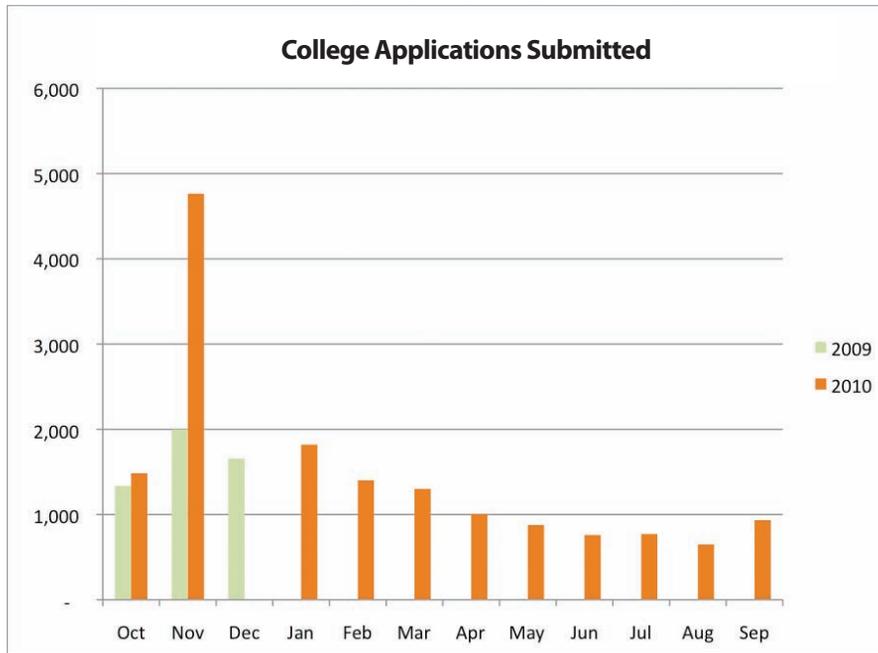


**Chart 11:** Accounts created on cfwv.com by month; 2009 to 2010 comparison.<sup>1</sup>

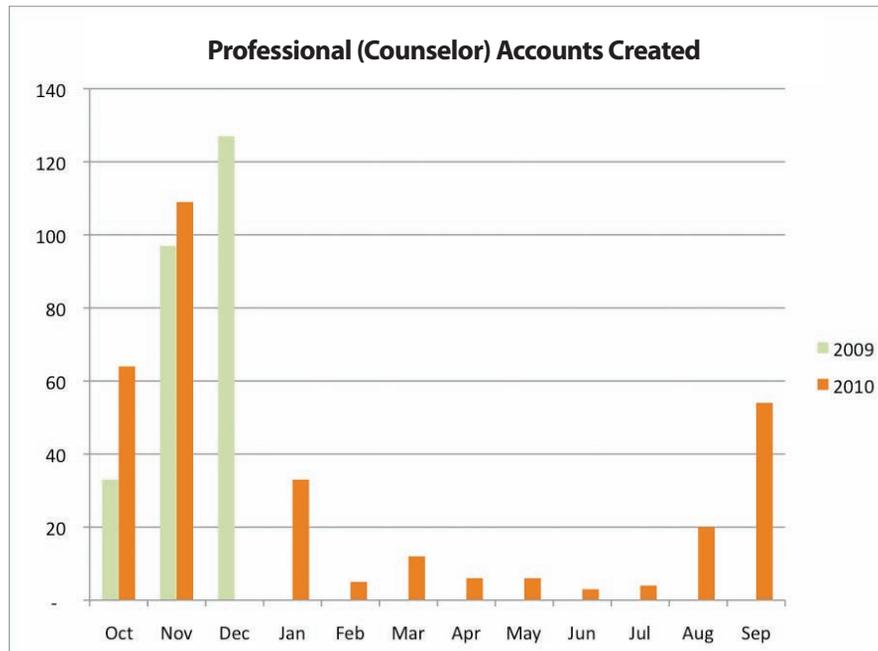


**Chart 12:** CFWV.com total accounts disaggregated by user role.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reporting period: October 1, 2009 through November 30, 2010; Source: CFWV.com site statistics



**Chart 13:** College applications submitted by month through the cfwv.com online application portal; 2009 to 2010 comparison.<sup>1</sup>

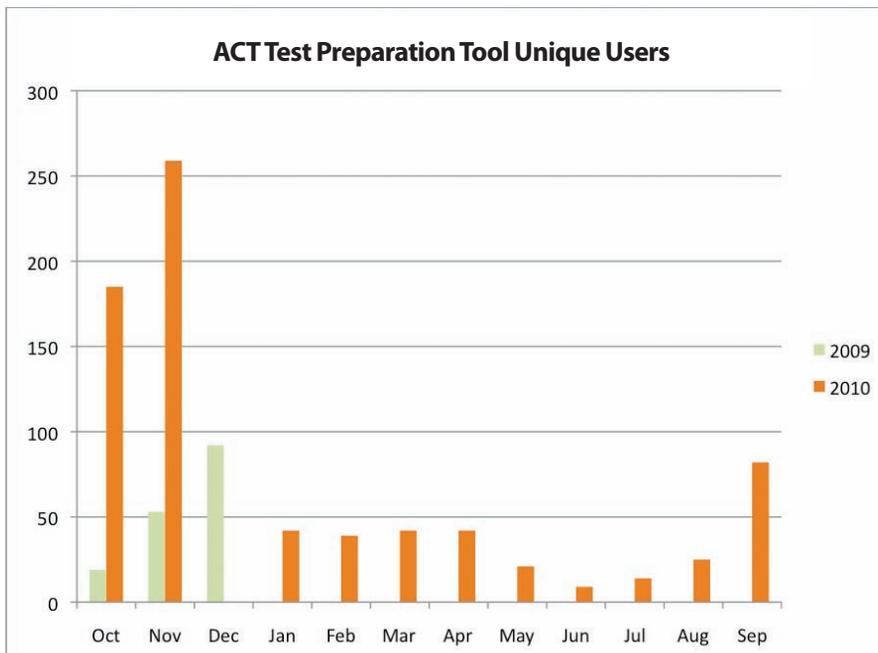


**Chart 14:** CFVW.com Professional Center accounts (counselor accounts) created by month; 2009 to 2010 comparison.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reporting period: October 1, 2009 through November 30, 2010; Source: CFVW.com site statistics

<sup>2</sup> Reporting period: October 1, 2009 through November 30, 2010; Source: CFVW.com Pro Center site statistics





**Chart 15:** Unique users of the ACT Test Preparation Tool on cfwv.com by month; 2009 to 2010 comparison.<sup>1</sup>

## ABOUT THE COLLEGE FOUNDATION OF WEST VIRGINIA (CFWV)

The College Foundation of West Virginia is a statewide outreach initiative designed to help students and families prepare for and succeed in college. The central component of the initiative is cfwv.com, a one-stop college and career planning web portal designed to consolidate previously decentralized resources and offer a comprehensive guide to planning, applying and paying for college in West Virginia.

CFWV was created through the vision of the Governor’s Jobs Cabinet and the West Virginia Legislature, which provided a \$2 million one-time appropriation to launch and market the website and broader outreach initiative. The CFWV campaign has been sustained through the utilization of federal funds, primarily those monies provided through the College Access Challenge Grant.

<sup>1</sup> Reporting period: October 1, 2009 through November 30, 2010; Source: CFWV.com site statistics

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The College Foundation of West Virginia (CFWV) is designed to serve as a resource to students, families, educators and community members. Please feel free to contact program staff via any of the following methods:

 **(304) 558-0655**

 **www.cfwv.com**

 **www.facebook.com/collegefoundationofwv**

 **@cfwv**

*Left: Students from Sandy River Middle School attended an event at Concord University co-sponsored by West Virginia GEAR UP, CFWV, and Concord University’s “McDowell County Initiative.”*



# COLLEGE GOAL SUNDAY<sup>SM</sup>

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> is a one-day event designed to provide students and families with the opportunity to receive free, one-on-one support in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> program was created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association with funding from Lilly Endowment, Inc., with supplemental support from the Lumina Foundation for Education. In 2009, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission received a grant to implement the program in West Virginia.

The Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives, along with partner organizations such as TRiO, GEAR UP, the financial aid community, and others, is responsible for organizing the event and marketing the services available to students and families. The grant was secured and implemented in its first year by the Commission's Division of Financial Aid. Funding for this program will continue through 2012, and the Commission aims to build on the program's inaugural success by expanding service locations each year.

## SERVICE AREA

College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> workshops are held at the following locations:

- Bluefield State College
- Braxton County High School
- Capitol High School
- Concord University<sup>1</sup>
- Davis & Elkins College
- Erma Byrd Higher Education Center
- Fairmont State University Gaston Caperton Center
- Glenville State College
- Lincoln County High School
- Marshall University Mid-Ohio Valley Center
- Mountwest Community and Technical College
- New River Community and Technical College
- Potomac State College of West Virginia University
- Ripley High School
- Southern WV Community and Technical College
- Shepherd University
- WV Northern Community and Technical College
- West Virginia University

## 2010 PROGRAM OUTCOMES

In 2010, the Division of Financial Aid coordinated the first of three annual College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> events. More than 200 volunteers from various college access organizations and higher education institutions throughout the state joined forces to offer students free, one-on-one confidential assistance in completing the FAFSA. In the program's first year, workshops were held at seventeen locations statewide and 327 students and families received help during the event.<sup>2</sup>

In spring of 2010, the program was moved to the Division of Student Success and P-20 Initiatives, so that these outreach efforts can be aligned with the College Foundation of West Virginia campaign. An additional location, Concord University, will be added for College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> 2011, which will be held statewide February 13, 2011 from 1 to 4 p.m.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Information regarding College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> can be found on [cfvv.com](http://cfvv.com).

<sup>1</sup> Concord University is a new site added for the 2011 College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> workshop series.

<sup>2</sup> Source: College Goal Sunday<sup>SM</sup> workshop registration forms and location summary reports.

*Left: Students who attended the Governor's Honors Symposium for West Virginia GEAR UP Graduates were able to complete financial aid applications and explore [cfvv.com](http://cfvv.com) online through mobile computer labs available at the event. College Goal Sunday offers similar labs with experts on hand to assist families in completing the FAFSA.*

STUDENTS WHO ATTENDED "GEAR UP U!" PARTICIPATED IN A VARIETY OF COURSES, INCLUDING ELECTIVES IN FIELDS SUCH AS HEALTH SCIENCES, BUSINESS, AND COMMUNICATIONS.







*Above: Students from Lincoln County High School toured Marshall University.*

*Featured on the front cover: Morgan Workman, a Mingo County student who graduated from "GEAR UP U!" at Concord University.*

**DIVISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS AND P-20 INITIATIVES**

West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

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