Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is an innovative college access program designed to significantly increase the number of students from low-income communities who stay in school and are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

GEAR UP differs from other college access programs by:

- raising the academic aspirations of entire cohorts, not just selected individuals and cultivating the motivation, knowledge and skills needed to succeed along the pathway to college;
- serving children early in their academic careers, beginning in 7th grade;
- serving cohorts of students all the way through high school; and
- enlisting the involvement of parents, teachers, guidance counselors and school administrators, as well as community groups.

Because the GEAR UP cohort approach ensures that all students in particular grades are served, the program is a natural vehicle for systemic change.