



# State of New Mexico

## *Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
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## **GOVERNOR RICHARDSON ANNOUNCES NEW MEXICO RECEIVES \$18 MILLION FOR COLLEGE PREP PROGRAM**

### *GEAR UP Program to Reach 6,000 Middle School Students*

SANTA FE – Governor Richardson today, along with Senator Jeff Bingaman and Congressmen Tom Udall, announced that more New Mexico students will be ready for college thanks to an \$18 million GEAR UP grant. GEAR UP stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs. The U.S. Department of Education has awarded the New Mexico Higher Education Department \$18 million over six years to help low-income students prepare for college. More than 6,000 New Mexico seventh graders in 18 low-income districts will benefit from the program beginning this fall.

“Through GEAR UP, we are changing the higher education landscape of New Mexico with early intervention in grade school. This is the best news for New Mexico’s seventh grade students. GEAR UP will inspire their interest in school and provide the tools for them to succeed,” said Governor Bill Richardson. “By being awarded the GEAR UP grant, the New Mexico Higher Education Department has achieved what I charged them to do – improve access to college for all New Mexicans and ensure a student’s success once enrolled.”

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) were created to encourage more young people from low-income families to consider and prepare early for college. GEAR UP is designed to enable more students to succeed in middle and secondary school, to study hard, and to take the right courses to become college eligible and competitive for admission to colleges and universities. GEAR UP enables states and low-income communities to create new or expanded plans that strengthen their schools and provide more educational opportunities for low-income students.

“New Mexico’s GEAR UP project helps provide students with the tools they need to prepare for college. The funding awarded is an important investment in our state’s future,” Senator Bingaman said. The Bush Administration’s 2007 budget request proposed to zero out funding for the GEAR UP program. Bingaman has joined efforts to fight cuts to the program and continues to work to ensure funding is restored.

“GEAR UP partnerships are designed to have long term benefits in communities by providing early financial resources and academic guidance for many low income, diverse or rurally located students,” said U.S. Representative Tom Udall. “This \$18 million GEAR UP grant is a great investment in our seventh graders that I am positive will pay off.”

The New Mexico Higher Education Department presented a competitive bid through the U.S. Department of Education and is one of only seven states awarded GEAR UP funds this year. The grant will follow a cohort of seventh grade students in low-income communities across the state, providing them with college preparation counseling, leadership training, support, programs, tutoring, summer workshops on college campuses, financial aid application assistance, as well as guidance for their parents and assistance and materials for their teachers. GEAR UP students will be eligible to receive a full scholarship to any New Mexico public college or university. The 2006-2012 GEAR UP state funding will be matched by more than 25 partners and will supplement the work of the strong local GEAR UP partnerships at New Mexico’s colleges and universities.

“GEAR UP is a proven program that helps students beat the odds and succeed. According to the Center for Public Policy and Higher Education’s report *Measuring Up 2004*, New Mexico gets an F in Preparation because New Mexico is one of the lowest performing states in the percentage of young people earning a high school diploma,” said New Mexico Higher Education Secretary Dr. Beverlee J. McClure. “Our state’s low-income students are the ones who face the most difficult obstacles to overcome so they can attend college. That’s why this commitment is so important and far-reaching.”

Receipt of the grant adds another item to the accomplishments for the Governor’s Year of the Child initiative. The GEAR UP program in New Mexico will create partnerships among students, business community members, parents, teachers, administrators, and the higher education community to improve the reach and effectiveness of our educational system. In addition, it supports the work of the Governor’s High School Redesign Initiative and the Public Education Department’s Priority Schools Bureau and Rural Schools Office.

For more information about New Mexico’s GEAR UP program, contact the New Mexico Higher Education Department’s Dr. Elizabeth Gutierrez, Director of P20 Policy and Development, 505-476-6543 or Rebecca Belletto, Educational Policy and Program Analyst, 505-476-6521 or visit [www.hed.state.nm.us](http://www.hed.state.nm.us). For more about the national GEAR UP programs, visit [www.edpartnerships.org](http://www.edpartnerships.org).