



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Hawai'i College Access Program That Serves Over 16,000 Students Celebrates National GEAR UP Week

Honolulu, Hawai'i – Hawai'i will be celebrating the success of GEAR UP Hawai'i, a college-access program that serves over 16,000 low-income students statewide, during National GEAR UP Week 2015, starting September 21. Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide students and families the resources they need to succeed in college. Since its inception in 1999, the national GEAR UP program has improved educational outcomes for millions of low-income students across the United States.

The program aims to broaden college awareness, expand academic readiness and increase postsecondary success among Hawai'i's public school students. GEAR UP Hawai'i collaborates with the Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) and the University of Hawai'i (UH) System as well as the government, nonprofit and private sectors to provide information, encouragement, support, resources and services and help eliminate achievement gaps among groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

One of GEAR UP Hawaii's major initiatives this year was promoting and increasing the opportunities for high school students to take early college classes. Research shows participation in college-level coursework during high school can increase students' exposure and aspirations to postsecondary success. In Spring 2015, twelve high schools statewide initiated the Early College High School Program, designed to allow more high school students to earn six or more college credits before they graduate from high school. For three years, with the support of the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation, GEAR UP Hawai'i, will invest more than \$1.2 million of resources to fund tuition and expenses and provide technical assistance to selected high schools working in

partnership with University of Hawai‘i campuses, to provide high school-based early college courses. This fall, the program is offering 23 classes on high school campuses.

“National GEAR UP Week is a time to celebrate all these accomplishments in our community as well as for programs across the country,” says Angela Jackson, GEAR UP Program Director and Associate Director of Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education. “To be part of a national initiative that provides college access opportunities to more than 580,000 low-income, minority, and disadvantaged students nationwide in 42 states is something worth celebrating.”

“GEAR UP Hawai‘i has been a critical program in our state to assist in leading education reform efforts in college access and success,” said Karen Lee, Executive Director of Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education, which oversees the statewide GEAR UP program. “The program works hand in hand with the University of Hawai‘i and the Hawaii State Department of Education to prepare Hawaii’s students to graduate from high school ready for college or a career and help reach our state’s goal of having 55% of working age adults with a college degree by 2025.”

For more information about GEAR UP Hawai‘i, please contact Lesli Yogi, Business and Community Outreach Specialist, lyogi@hawaii.edu or go to <http://gearup.hawaii.edu>. To learn more about the national GEAR UP program, please contact the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships at 202-530-1135 or www.edpartnerships.org.

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GEAR UP Hawai‘i is a program of Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education, a statewide partnership led by the Executive Office on Early Learning, the Hawaii State Department of Education and the University of Hawai‘i System that works to strengthen the education pipeline from early childhood through higher education so that all students achieve college and career success. Hawai‘i P-20’s partners share a sense of urgency about the need to improve Hawai‘i’s educational outcomes in an increasingly global economy, and have established a goal of 55 percent of Hawai‘i’s working age adults having a two- or four-year college degree by 2025. For more information, visit <http://www.p20hawaii.org>.