

DATE: November 20, 2008

SUBJECT: GEAR UP TN Status Report

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Information

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The GEAR UP initiative is a federal discretionary grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP provides six-year grants to states to provide services at high-poverty middle and high schools. GEAR UP grantees serve an entire cohort of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follow the cohort through high school. GEAR UP TN is designed to promote student achievement and enhance awareness of the need to expand access to post-secondary education statewide, especially in those areas of the state that are traditionally underserved. GEAR UP TN funds are also used to provide incentive awards to students graduating from the high schools served and scholarships to low-income students in the cohort.

The GEAR UP TN office started the third year of the grant with a renewed focus on student success and academic preparation, including increasing professional development opportunities for school administrator and teachers and building academic capacity within the nine GEAR UP TN school systems. GEAR UP TN heightened its statewide college access initiatives with the launch of a public outreach campaign in mid-October. Campaign television and radio advertisements are set to broadcast this month.

THEC received the budget expansion necessary to begin implementation of the College Access Challenge Grant. College access and success is also the focus of this grant. Initiatives will include professional development opportunities for middle/high school counselors and higher education admissions counselors, a college access course for in-service and pre-service school counselors, the broadening of public outreach activities, two TSAC outreach specialist positions and three to five sub-grants to non-profit organizations currently working in the field of college access services.