

DATE: November 10, 2011

SUBJECT: GEAR UP TN/CACG/TCASN 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 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 College Access Challenge Grant is a federal formula grant program focused on providing professional development opportunities for college access professionals and enhancing the services offered to high-need students through the expansion of current college access programs via the Tennessee College Mentor Corps. The overall goal of Tennessee’s CACG is two-fold: (1) make college accessible to more Tennessee graduates through college access and success focused mentoring, and (2) facilitate the transition between high school and community college, and community college and four-year institutions, thereby aiding in college retention and completion.

The Tennessee College Access and Success Network, established through the Lumina Foundation for Education KnowHow2Go re-grant and expanded through Race to the Top, connects college access and success programs with like-minded organizations with the purpose of increasing the number of Tennesseans participating and succeeding in postsecondary opportunities. The Network creates a college-going culture in communities across the state by expanding and creating new college access and success programs, educating professionals, facilitating statewide advocacy, and cultivating organizational and Network development.

Staff will provide an update on GEAR UP grant completion and College Access Challenge Grant implementation; report details from Tennessee College Access and Success Network activities; and discuss a new grant award from the Lumina Foundation.