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Tips for a Great Campus Visit

BY CORY CHENOWETH, FINANCIAL AID MANAGER

As we all know, the college campus visit is a critical component when a student is deciding if and where they want to continue their education after high school. I was particularly moved at the fall conference when both student speakers, Patricia Korman and Chelsea Morales, mentioned how their campus visit experience played a major role when discerning where to attend college. There are number of excellent ideas for making the most of a campus visit experience outlined in the Technical Assistance Manual (TAM) and at www.gearup.mus.edu, but here are a few other additional tips.

Tip 1: Be Creative
A college visit is much more than just a campus tour. I’d recommend constantly looking for a way to make your campus visit more engaging and meaningful for students. Some ideas might be to take part in a college class, a campus scavenger hunt, hands on research activities, team building activities, meeting members of the American Indian club on campus, or scheduling a motivational speaker such as professor or a current student who graduated from the local high school.

This is a great chance for students not only to be exposed to a college campus, but also to a new and different community. Many college towns also have enrichment opportunities that the students can experience such as art, cultural or science museums.

Tip 2: Be Prepared
The key to any great campus visit is preparation. Great preparation by the middle/high school, the university/college, as well as by the students themselves will maximize the campus visit experience for everyone. Before calling the school to schedule a visit, be sure to check the College Information Grid and complete the GEAR UP College Visit Logistics form – both are found in the TAM and on the Montana GEAR UP website. Having this information handy will greatly help when communicating with the school’s campus visit coordinator. Also, the more notice you can give the school, the better it will be for everyone involved – plan to contact the school no less than four weeks prior to the date you would like to visit.

Tip 3: Pre-Visit Activities
These activities are an excellent chance for the students to show off their creativity. I know some schools require students to do some pre-visit research on the school, and then come up with lists of questions to ask current college students, the admissions office, the financial aid office, professors, etc. Examples of questions might be “How’s the food?”, “What is the hardest part of college?”,”What do people do on weekends?”, “Are the math classes hard?”. Other examples of questions, as well as on-the-bus activities, can be found in your GEAR UP TAM.

(continued on page 4)

Navigating Big Sky Pathways with MAPS and MCIS

BY SHAUNDA HILDEBRAND, MONTANA CAREER RESOURCE NETWORK DIRECTOR

Montana Career Resource Network (MCRN), the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE), and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) are proud to announce that the Big Sky Pathways Montana Achievement Plan (MAP) system was released to Montana Career Information System (MCIS) sites on August 23, 2010. Now all MCIS portfolio users can access a Big Sky Pathway (recommended program of study) based on their career cluster interest and plan their high school coursework to align with Montana postsecondary education course requirements by school and degree sought. The MAP system provides the only place for students to identify postsecondary course requirements for a program of study at each Montana campus. Currently, MCIS contains programs of study for all Montana 2-year institutions; the addition of the 4-year institutions is a priority for 2010-2011.

Schools/sites can edit the default Big Sky Pathways, use the default courses and Big Sky Pathways as is, or customize the MAP with their schools’ courses and Pathways. This allows schools to put course planning information and their matching offerings in front of students in order to make course planning simpler while meeting the program of study requirements of Career and Technical Education (Perkins). Using the MCIS MAP feature better prepares students to be college and career ready. The MAP shows a recommended route while allowing students to personalize their path by choosing different courses that also meet requirements.

Login to your MCIS Portfolio today to see this great new tool! Free training and assistance to load courses and Pathways is available by contacting Shaunda Hildebrand at 800-541-3904 or via email: shildebrand@mt.gov.
Financial Aid: Montana GEAR UP Achievement Grant Reminder

BY CORY CHENOWETH, FINANCIAL AID MANAGER

This year we are, again, awarding $1,500 GEAR UP Achievement Grants to juniors in high school. In order to qualify for the award, students must submit a completed Achievement Grant application to liaisons by November 5th and also meet the following parameters:

1. Must be currently enrolled in a GEAR UP school
2. Have a 2.0 GPA at the time of application
3. Maintain a 2.0 GPA through graduation from a GEAR UP school
4. Be on track to complete the college prep curriculum:
   - 4 years of English
   - 3 years of Mathematics (Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry or a course beyond Algebra II)
   - 2 years of Lab Science (Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
   - 3 years of Social Studies (World History, World Cultures, US History, Government, Psychology, Sociology)
   - 2 years of Electives (Language, Computer Science, Visual/Performing Arts, Career/Technical Ed.)

Achievement Grant recipients may use the $1,500 award toward a degree at any postsecondary institution in the country including 4-year public and private colleges and universities, 2-year institutions, and tribal colleges. In addition to the $1,500 award, receiving the achievement grant is also the first step a student must take in order to apply for the $22,000 Montana GEAR UP Pathways Scholarship during the winter of their senior year.

If you have any questions about the Achievement Grant please feel free to contact Cory Chenoweth, Financial Aid Manager, at 406-444-0350 or cchenoweth@montana.edu.

GEAR UP Spotlight: Glacier GEAR UP gets a Running Start

BY ROB BREEDING, GLACIER HIGH SCHOOL GEAR UP LIAISON

GEAR UP is all about getting students ready for college, early. At Glacier High School some of our GEAR UP students have moved past college readiness directly to college enrollment.

Last spring Glacier GEAR UP set up a Running Start course, College Writing 101, especially for high school students at Flathead Valley Community College. Completing the course has left GEAR UP students motivated to succeed in college.

“I’ll have 10 (college) credits by the end of this semester,” said Desiree Landon, a Glacier High School senior. “I am really excited about that.”

Just a half credit short of high school graduation, Landon is taking two more Running Start courses – Intro to Psychology and Public Speaking – this fall, as well as two AP courses, Language and Literature and Statistics. She plans to take more Running Start courses again in the spring. Landon is checking on the core requirements for her dream school, the University of Houston, before she picks classes for next semester.

Working with FVCC, GEAR UP is setting up college courses designed to meet the needs of Running Start students. In the spring this meant adding an intersession course scheduled for six hours a day on five consecutive Saturdays. The course was offered as a hybrid, meaning some instruction was delivered online. This allowed the course to meet the 45-hour requirement of a typical three-credit class. To make college courses more affordable, Glacier GEAR UP offers grants of $150 per class for students who enroll in Running Start courses.

The course was offered for dual credit, and the students were met in class by a familiar face, Glacier High English teacher Cheryl Steenson. Steenson has since left GHS to teach in Columbia. Steenson was an adjunct at FVCC before accepting a position at GHS, and continued to teach evening courses at the college.

School administrators see the GEAR UP program as a way to expand the educational opportunities for Glacier students.

“We are finding that there are more and more ways to deliver an education to a student,” said Micah Hill, assistant principal at Glacier High School.

FVCC is just a mile from the GHS campus. This proximity makes it easy for GEAR UP students to schedule a Running Start course instead of a first- or seventh-period class at the high school.

Students can also schedule classes at FVCC during the middle of the day, using their lunch time to make sure they can return to class on time.

Kalispell School District students have long been able to enroll in Running Start courses at FVCC. But Hill sees the Glacier GEAR UP grants as a way to expand Running Start opportunities to a group of students who might not otherwise be able to afford the cost of Running Start. A typical three-credit course costs $232.50. Text books can easily add another $100 to the bill.

“It’s huge,” he said. “We’re bridging the socio-economic gap.”

The grants have allowed GEAR UP students to shine. All seven students who took the College Writing course passed with a C or better (the class GPA average was 3.1).

“It’s never been an issue of whether or not they were capable; it’s been an issue of means,” Hill said. “This has opened our students’ eyes to what they can accomplish. It shows them that college is a possibility, it’s a reality, and that it’s achievable for them.”

On that point, Landon agrees. “That class made me believe I can do it, that it’s not as hard as I thought,” she said. “I’m serious about going to college. I am going to go.”
GEAR UP Spotlight: Nashua Summer Science Program  
**BY JANICE RORVIK, GEAR UP LIAISON**

Learning about natural science out in the field was the focus of this year’s summer program offered at Nashua High School. Marc Kloker, Nashua School science teacher, and Joanne Stewart with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks presented information and supervised activities during the 4-day program. Day one began with a discussion of natural science careers, opportunities, and their importance. GPS units were also discussed and then the students participated in a scavenger hunt for oranges using their GPS units. Projects were then discussed with emphasis put on following scientific procedure. The day ended with a talk about hazards and safety, and ethics while working in the field.

Day two started bright and early as Kloker and the students traveled to the CMR National Wildlife Refuge. Groups split apart and began their studies. One group made 25X25 plots and recorded all snakes, spiders, lizards, and cactus found in the plots. The second group did a stream study of two different drainages using dip nets to look for organisms, and also tested water temperature and recorded vegetation and terrestrial vertebrates and invertebrates. Camp was set up and the night was spent roasting smores and singing songs around the campfire. Day three consisted of continued work on the individual studies and then a long ride home.

Day four was spent back in the classroom discussing how to make and prepare scientific reports. Students then designed Powerpoint presentations of their projects. Parents and family members were invited to watch the students give final presentations of their projects.

Education Reform in Finland  
**BY JESSIE SALISBURY, PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

Chris Lohse, Strategic Initiative Director of Information Systems and Research for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) spoke to Montana GEAR UP school administrators, counselors, teachers, and liaisons at the 2010 fall conference in Helena. Mr. Lohse discussed using best evidence from international, business, and cognitive research settings to target interventions and strategies for student success at both the policy and school levels. Part of his discussion focused on the success of schools in Finland, how the country has emerged as the world leader in student achievement, and what can be learned from Finland’s successful school reform. The October/November issue of the National Education Association (NEA) Today Magazine includes an article written by Linda Darling-Hammond, the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University, discussing this very topic. The whole article can be found at [www.nea.org/home/40991.htm](http://www.nea.org/home/40991.htm).

2010-2011 Student Poster Contest

You’ve heard the saying “a picture is worth a thousand words”. In the advertising world a simple graphic along with a few well chosen words or slogan like “got milk?” can depict a full story. Did you know, before Theodore Seuss Geisel (known most famously as Dr. Seuss) found fame as a children’s book author, the primary outlet for his creative efforts was designing magazine ads for products such as bug spray?

We invite all GEAR UP students in 7th and 8th grades to submit an advertisement in the form of a poster for the 6th annual Montana GEAR UP poster contest. Here’s your chance to show off your talents as an artist. Put on your creative thinking cap and ponder what lies ahead for you in the next five to ten years. What kind of advertisement can you come up with for Montana GEAR UP? Put it all together on your poster and give it to your GEAR UP Liaison.

Be creative in developing an advertisement and/or slogan for Montana GEAR UP. It can be simple or elaborate, but it should be a clear message when looked at from a distance because the posters may be displayed in public places. Look at advertisements in favorite magazines, billboards along the road, and even what catches your attention in TV ads for inspiration. Deadline for submissions to GEAR UP liaisons from students is December 10th and entries are due to Montana GEAR UP from liaisons by December 17th.

Contact Jessie Salisbury with questions at 406-444-0056 or jsalisbury@montana.edu.
Montana GEAR UP Reminders & Upcoming Events

October 1: Deadline for entering all new students and creating new 2010-2011 student performance records for continuing students in GEARS. Contact Andi Rankin at arankin@montana.edu or 406-444-0674 or Jessie Salisbury at jsalisbury@montana.edu or 406-444-0056 for more information.

October 4-15: EXPLORE and PLAN testing window for Montana GEAR UP schools.


October 21-22: Pro/ENGINEER Design Training in Kalispell at Glacier High School. Registration information is available at www.gearup.mus.edu. Contact Jessie Salisbury at 406-444-0056 or jsalisbury@montana.edu with questions.


October 29: EXPLORE and PLAN documents due to ACT: Mail tests directly to ACT to arrive no later than October 29th.

November 5: Achievement Grant application deadline for students to submit to liaison. Contact Cory Chenoweth, Financial Aid Manager, at 406-444-0350 or cchenoweth@montana.edu with questions.

November 12: Achievement Grant application deadline for liaisons to submit to Montana GEAR UP.

November 19: Montana GEAR UP student survey ready online.

November 23: Montana College Access Network (MCAN) Education Call 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm. Topic will cover transition from high school to college. For more information visit: www.knowhow2gomontana.ning.com.

Tips for a Great Campus Visit (continued)

Tip 4: During the Visit
First and foremost...HAVE FUN! Be on time. If you are going to be late, make sure you call the school and let them know. Make sure that both students and chaperones are active participants in the campus visit experience – colleges SHOULD NOT have to discipline students or adults for disrespectful behavior. Take pictures and/or video of the campus visit experience.

Tip 5: After the Visit
After filling out the campus visit survey, verbal and written activities both on the bus and in the classroom will help students reflect on their latest campus experience, and how it compares to other visits they’ve taken in the past. Also, it might be a fun activity to use the pictures and/or videos for the students to present to younger grades about how they liked their campus visit experience.

Montana GEAR UP Staff Directory

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Our mission: Montana GEAR UP believes that postsecondary education is possible for all Montana students, regardless of economic background, and strives to empower them to realize that ambition. Montana GEAR UP brings this message to middle and high schools, students, their parents, and the community through early college and career awareness activities, scholarships, financial aid information, and improved academic support to raise the expectations and achievement of all.