



Legislative/Policy Update

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

With 2008 well upon us, we here at NCCEP, wanted to get a jumpstart on this year's Congressional policy and appropriation's process by providing you with a brief update on what we can expect for GEAR UP reauthorization and funding matters during the 2nd session of the 110th Congress.

GEAR UP Reauthorization in HEA

As reported in a previous GEAR UP legislative/policy update, GEAR UP's original legislative authority as contained in the Higher Education Act of 1998 has been up for reauthorization since 2004. While in 2007 we saw HEA reauthorization proposals move through the various policymaking stages both in the House of Representatives and the Senate, Congress still managed to recess for the year without enacting a final updated national higher education law. However, according to Congressional sources, HEA reauthorization and therefore, GEAR UP's reauthorization, will be among one of the first items considered by Congress upon their return in late January.

Given this information, we expect a GEAR UP/HEA reauthorization bill to be completed and signed into law by early March of 2008. Until then, we at NCCEP will continue to work with Congressional authorizers to make certain that the GEAR UP policy changes advanced in the previous Congressional session ultimately become law. Summaries of some of the most notable GEAR UP language modifications included in H.R. 4137, The College Affordability and Access Act of 2007 and S.1642, The Higher Education Amendments of 2007, are provided below for your review.

GEAR UP Reauthorization in the House

H.R. 4137 - The College Affordability and Access Act of 2007 enhances GEAR UP by:

- Making GEAR UP a 7 year program and permitting GEAR UP grantees to serve students through their first year in college or opt to provide services to students beginning in the 6th grade through completion of the 12th grade;
 - Providing grantees flexibility in calculating and meeting the GEAR UP match requirement through adjustments to the way matching funds are accounted for, documented and accrued over time; and
 - Linking the minimum GEAR UP scholarship amount to the minimum Federal Pell Grant award instead of the maximum Pell award, therefore allowing more GEAR UP partnerships programs to participate in the GEAR UP scholarship component.
- H.R. 4137 was marked up and reported out of the House Education and Labor Committee by a vote of 45-0 on December 19, 2007. The measure is now in the process of being finalized for floor action, which will more than likely occur in early February. GEAR UP Reauthorization in the Senate

S.1642 – Higher Education Amendments Act of 2007 enhances GEAR UP by:

- Providing grantees the option to use carry over funds to continue serving students through their first year of post-secondary education. S. 1642 does not extend GEAR UP to 7 years like it's House counterpart bill;
- Bolstering the list of permissible early intervention services and activities to include a greater emphasis on fostering and improving parent involvement and training and permission for State grantees to use funds to provide technical assistance to middle and secondary schools located within the state and to GEAR UP partnerships operating within the state; and
- Tying the minimum scholarship amount grantees are required to award to eligible students to the minimum Federal Pell Grant versus to the maximum Federal Pell Grant, which is identical to the GEAR UP Scholarship modification made in H.R. 4137.

S.1642 was considered and approved by the Senate by a vote of 95-0 back in late July and has since then be held, awaiting conference with the House HEA reauthorization bill. Given the similarities of the changes made to GEAR UP in both bills, NCCEP doesn't expect GEAR UP to be a matter of contention during HEA conference negotiations between the House and Senate although some minor issues will need to be ironed out before final approval.

Links to the legislative text of both bills are provided below for your review:

S. 1642-

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_bills&docid=f:s1642es.txt.pdf

H.R. 4137-

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_bills&docid=f:h4137rh.txt.pdf

GEAR UP FY 2009 Appropriations

As is the case at the start of each New Year, NCCEP and the GEAR UP community must once again turn our attention towards GEAR UP's funding consideration as the FY 2009 federal appropriations process gets underway in the coming weeks, beginning with the submission of the President's Budget recommendation on February 4, 2008. While last year's appropriation process went from promising to peculiar, resulting in another cycle of leveled funding for GEAR UP, NCCEP is already preparing to renew our call for Congress to increase GEAR UP funding from the \$303 million allocated this year to at least \$350 million in FY 2009.

Yet again, NCCEP will be working closely with our Congressional champions (Reps. Fattah & Souder and Sens. Burr & Clinton), organizational partners and, of course, you, the GEAR UP constituency in order to ensure Congressional appropriators give full consideration to increasing GEAR UP's FY 2009 funding level. To that end, the months of January and February serve as a great time for you to reach out to your Congressional Representative and Senators to educate them on the your GEAR UP program or to invite them out to attend any upcoming events or activities you may have scheduled.

To contact your Legislators and/or their Education Legislative Assistants electronically, please visit the House website www.house.gov or the Senate website www.senate.gov. To contact them by telephone, dial the congressional operator at (202) 225-3121. If you are unsure about whom your Legislators are, you can find that information out by visiting the House and Senate websites and typing in your zip code in the upper left hand corner. For further questions or information, please feel free to contact NCCEP at (202) 530-1135.