Big Blue Journey: A College Exploration Experience

In June 2014, 254 GEAR UP scholars participated in the Big Blue Journey: a three-day summer camp focused on developing the skills needed to succeed in high school and beyond. Held on the USU Logan campus, the eighth-grade participants lived a simulation of college life in order to help them transition to ninth grade, and inspire them to make college preparation a priority in high school. They attended workshops for academic enrichment and support, and extracurricular activities to develop leadership, teamwork, and social skills. They met and worked with peers from other GEAR UP schools while living on the Logan campus in student dormitories. Based on this experience, many students said that college now seemed like a reality to them.

“I had an idea that college was so much work, but I did not realize that it could be so much fun.”

-Sydney Smith, 8th grade
North Davis Junior High

Thank You

We appreciate the support of the USU Campus Store for their donation of raffle prizes for Big Blue Journey.

A student surveys the camp schedule at orientation.
The Impact of the USU Campus Visit

Nothing makes visions of college attendance come alive in students’ minds quite like a campus visit. By actually touring university buildings and interacting with the colleges and various student clubs, students can see themselves in a higher education setting. This new awareness builds their confidence in their potential, increases their desire to attend college, and helps them set goals to achieve that vision. With this in mind, USU STARS! GEAR UP, along with our University partners, do everything that we can to offer opportunities for students to visit the university campus and take part in educational activities led by USU faculty and staff.

An Overnight Engineering Experience

In late June 2014, Antonio Arce, Director of the Ute Tribe Education Department, worked with USU Student Services, Distance Education, IT Department, and USU STARS! GEAR UP to organize a memorable overnight visit for 28 students from the Uintah Basin. The purpose of the visit was to show students the opportunities college can offer to develop their interests into a career. Among their agenda was a hands-on computer engineering activity from Shane Hansen of Rakuten MediaForge and Hal Potter, Network Administrator for the USU College of Education. Students were given the opportunity to examine the inner workings of a computer, and discovered the individual parts that work together to make the computer function.

Hal Potter and Shane Hansen (back) work with students from the Ute Tribe to discover the interior parts that make computers work.
DIA Students Visit Area Campuses

Dual Immersion Academy sent their eighth-grade students on a college tour, seeing multiple universities over the course of a week. They stayed one night at USU. This group got hands-on experience with some incredible biological science. They extracted DNA from a strawberry. Visiting the Insect Collection, they were able to hold creatures like cockroaches and lizards. To finish off their trip, university students helped them dissect pig's hearts.

“I really enjoyed going, since we learned many things for college to prepare us.”

-Aimee Contreras, 6th grade
American Preparatory Academy

APA Parents and Students Visit College Together

In May 2014, 155 students from American Preparatory Academy, along with 50 of their parents, visited the USU campus to experience college life. Students discovered what college is like through activities presented by several USU departments, including Athletics, Access and Diversity, Career Services, and Financial Aid. Parents attended lectures about the value of higher education, and how to help make a successful college career a reality for their children.
Goldman Sachs Gives Back: Education and Example

The seventh- and eighth-grade GEAR UP students at American Preparatory Academy’s (APA) West Valley 2 campus received a full day of financial aid lessons from 20 volunteers from Goldman Sachs. The demonstrations helped the students understand how credit and investment strategies work, and illustrated the benefits of attending college. The Goldman Sachs employees led hands-on activities while connecting with the students by sharing personal stories from their own childhood, educational and employment backgrounds. These living examples of college success resonated with students, enhancing financial lessons into inspirations for the future. Goldman Sachs employees have a long history of giving back to the communities where they live and work. Their efforts were well received by the APA Administration, faculty, students, and parents.

Thank You

Leslie Keisel, Superintendent of North Sanpete School district, has announced her retirement. The USU STARS! GEAR UP Team would like to thank her for her representation on the Superintendent’s Institute, and for all the great work she has done for GEAR UP and her district. We wish you all the best.

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Thank You

Leslie Keisel

Goldman Sachs

Leslie Keisel

USU STARS!
Utah State University

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