Over the course of the fall, many students from all across Utah came to visit Utah State University’s beautiful campus to find out more about the programs provided. Eighth grade GEAR UP scholars from *Mount Logan Middle School* paid visits to campus on several occasions, where they explored various academic fields that they were interested in pursuing. Their visit began with a presentation from Professor Emma Maughan, who teaches in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, about why education is so important. She emphasized to students that education opens opportunities, helps you solve problems, enriches your life, and enables you to make the world a better place. As the visit went on, GEAR UP scholars were asked to remember these points throughout the day. Scholars were split into four different groups according to Elementary Education, Psychology, Communicative Disorders & Deaf Education, and Special Education departments where they participated in various activities according to the department’s research. Some of the activities included reading and recess with 1st grade students, American Sign Language and phonetic lessons, and a tour of the Sound Beginnings Lab (a facility for services for children with hearing loss).

Eleventh grade scholars from *American Preparatory Academy* also had the opportunity to visit USU, where they focused on the engineering programs on campus. The groups were organized by gender and then young women went to SWE (Society of Women Engineers), while the young men went on a biological and mechanical engineering tour.

*cont. on page 2*
The young women learned about the road to college and what life as an engineering student looks like. In a major that is predominantly male, presenters emphasized the idea that the women could do anything they set their minds to. Presenters stressed the importance of support groups and asking for help. Following the presentation, the young women participated in a group activity where they were challenged to make the tallest tower that would hold a marshmallow with tape, yarn, and dried spaghetti noodles. While not all succeeded in the task, GEAR UP scholars learned the importance of teamwork, communication, and creativity.

During the late fall, more GEAR UP scholars from North Davis Junior High visited USU, where they began their fun-filled day with a presentation by John Broocksby, a Student Affairs marketing specialist, who shared the importance of taking opportunities to learn and grow. He discussed the fear of the unknown in the future, but emphasized the three most important things to remember throughout life: take opportunities to grow, work hard, and enjoy life! Students then split into groups, where one group was taken to learn about the dietetics program on campus. There they analyzed and tasted different types of chocolate. The other group took a sculpture tour throughout campus. The students created maps of their tours and enjoyed the last bit of nice weather before the frigid winter.

Utah State University has been ranked in the top 15 best college towns in the nation several times. USU offers nearly 160 undergraduate degrees, including economics, psychology, communicative disorders, nursing, mechanical engineering, elementary education, and much more. The average undergraduate class size is 25 students, providing a very high-quality educational experience. Football, basketball, volleyball, and other sporting events unite students to promote an uplifting atmosphere. Logan emulates a positive, college-town spirit. Just a short, 2-minute drive to the canyon, the beautiful mountains provide excellent recreation all year long. Utah State University is accepting of all, and encourages all of its students to get involved to ensure an extraordinary college experience.

GEAR UP scholars not only visited Utah State, but also had the chance to visit schools all over the state. These schools included the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, Weber State, Dixie State, and Utah Valley University. GEAR UP encourages students to visit their colleges of interests in order to compare public and private universities, as well as programs, campus life, tuition, and other information. We are thrilled to see GEAR UP scholars taking the steps to prepare for their future education as college students!
Here at USU STARS! GEAR UP Headquarters, we are announcing a new feature to our quarterly newsletter. Every quarter, one school and/or site coordinator will be selected to be highlighted, where we will focus on the wonderful progress they have made in furthering educational opportunities.

This month’s highlight is Heather Hafen, who is the site coordinator for North Sanpete High School and North Sanpete Middle School, where she manages three separate cohorts. One of the many accomplishments Heather has is creating the Taking Aim Academy. The Taking Aim Academy focuses on “a purpose, a plan, a passion, and a target.” The Academy focuses on each student class and helps develop important skills and habits that will benefit them in their education. For freshmen, the Academy focuses on study habits, school involvement, and ACT Aspire, as assessment that tests student readiness in English, math, reading, science, and writing. During their sophomore year, scholars participate in a semester long College and Career class that is based on self-discovery. They also take ACT Aspire, a student readiness assessment, and begin pathways to connect courses in high school to their future career. Juniors focus on ACT Prep and ACT, while seniors focus on the 90-day surge, a three month long event that includes meetings with counselors, completing brag sheets, collecting letters of recommendation, FAFSA, scholarships, college tours, and more! The goal of the Academy is to see long term sustainable improvement in student achievement.

Heather acknowledges the importance of including parents in GEAR UP. “We spend a lot of time getting to know our parents. We invite them on all of our college tours. We are present during their parent-teacher conferences and athletic events. We send out weekly emails, Facebook and Instagram posts, and tweets to parents with different tips on how to help their student be successful and how to prepare for college and careers.” Heather gives credit to the amazing tutors at North Sanpete High School, who ensure that the GEAR UP scholars are well provided for and taken care of, especially students who are academically at risk.

We are thrilled to see the impressive progress that Heather has contributed in making North Sanpete High School an outstanding school that is full of opportunities for GEAR UP scholars!

Above: NSHS Scholars dedicated hours to their College Application Day and FAFSA & Scholar- ship Night.
Below: GEAR UP had its very own float at the NSHS Homecoming parade. The sign reads: GEAR UP for College - Whatever it Takes. Great job, NSHS!

"GEAR UP provides opportunities that many students would never have and gives hope to so many of our students who may not have it." - Heather Hafen, NSHS & NSMS Site Coordinator

As National GEAR UP Week rolled around this past September, USU STARS! GEAR UP schools participated in several activities. Schools across Utah and Nevada use GEAR UP Week as an opportunity to raise awareness in their communities about the positive effect and many resources GEAR UP provides for their scholars. These are just a few of the many activities and events that our staff and scholars participated in.

In the middle schools, GEAR UP focuses on getting scholars involved by introducing them to the idea of preparing for college as early as possible to ensure a successful college start. Dual Immersion Academy brought in community outreach coordinators from Salt Lake Community College who presented a College 101 Jeopardy game. Mount Logan Middle School held daily activities at lunch, which included a dream wall on which scholars wrote their post-secondary education plans and goals. They played games like college Jenga and college tower toss, which helped them learn more about specific colleges throughout Utah and the collegiate degrees that can be obtained. North Davis Junior High also held several activities throughout the week, including college Kahoot games, sidewalk chalk, and a college pledge sign-up activity. Not only that, but North Davis Junior High also held a family event one evening to discuss college opportunities and how to prepare for them.

In the high schools, GEAR UP Week was full of fun and informational opportunities where students learned about journeying through college. At Logan High School, GEAR UP had its very own float in the Homecoming Parade. They also brought out guest speaker Rene Hernandez, a GEAR UP program coordinator, who shared his journey to college. At North Sanpete High School, GEAR UP scholars from the Student Body Office put together an introduction video of the staff to present to the student body. Posters of colleges were hung all around the common area, where students signed their name to their preferred college. Snow College came to North Sanpete High School to discuss college admissions, college life, and provided an engaging college scavenger hunt. Clearfield High School unveiled an online course designed to give informational access to all of their 500+ scholars about how to be successful. Scholars will be able to utilize the website throughout their high school, college, and future careers. At Wendover High School, Jimmy Moore, the USU Assistant Athletics Director, spoke with scholars about preparing early for college, the importance of academics, and always having a back-up plan. We are thrilled to hear more about the many activities that occurred throughout GEAR UP schools and want to thank everyone who participated! We love our GEAR UP schools!

We are thrilled to announce that Utah State University has been awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Education for a third cohort that began earlier this fall. With 19 educational and commercial partners, USU STARS! GEAR UP Grant three will serve nearly 3,000 students from middle school through their first year in college. This project will be adding new Site Coordinators to certain sites, as well as adding a new Program Director and new schools to the GEAR UP family. All cohorts will continue to collaborate with one another and communicate the best practices that are most beneficial to GEAR UP scholars.
APA Excels in Fall Events

American Preparatory Academy (APA) has been busy this fall! On October 3rd, APA hosted its annual GEAR UP Parent University night. Throughout the evening, parents had all of their questions about college opportunities answered by three representatives from Weber State University. Topics like FAFSA, scholarships, campus life, multiculturalism, and high school success were all covered throughout the discussion. If you missed it, stay tuned for APA’s Parent University night coming this spring! APA has also introduced their Senior Speaker Series, where senior students were able to explore various scholarship programs and academic pathways offered at Salt Lake Community College through an admissions representative, Iliana Clegg.

On October 11th, every APA GEAR UP scholar in 8th-11th grade took the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test). This assessment measures the student’s readiness for college, helps scholars access potential scholarships, and is great practice for future ACT/SAT exams. “Students will receive personalized feedback on their strengths and weaknesses with skills necessary for college study.” says Rob Guido, APA Site Coordinator, “It’s a powerful tool to utilize.” APA strongly prepares students for this exam, and encourages students to visit counselors to get tips and ideas to improve their skills.

APA boys participated in APA’s Empowering Your Tomorrow, a conference held on November 18th where they learned about careers in STEM. Along with hands-on interactive workshops, the boys also heard from an entomologist, a scientist who specializes in the study of insects. In early 2018, APA will be holding an all-girls event, Expanding Your Horizons. We would like to congratulate APA on their outstanding work in ensuring the progression of their scholars and focusing on their preparation for future education and careers.

In Memoriam

Our hearts are heavy as we mourn the loss of one of our GEAR UP family members. Manny Lopez, a freshman student from West Wendover High School, passed away on Sunday, November 26th. Manny will be missed by everyone who knew him. Our thoughts are with those affected by this tragedy and we extend our deepest condolences to Manny’s family and friends.

Manny Lopez was loved by many and will be missed.

Iliana Clegg left students feeling more informed about their college options, Pell grant funding, and transferring from a community college to a public university.

USU STARS! GEAR UP
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Program Director Cohort 2 - Jim Dorward
Program Coordinator Cohort 1 - Melia Balls
Program Coordinator Cohort 2 - Heather Ericson
Business Officer - Meg Boudrero
Business Officer Cohort 1 - Brent Baum
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