In summer 2016 Utah State University STARS! GEAR UP hosted its annual transition camp, Aggie Summit. GEAR UP scholars attended the three day, two night enrichment experience. The camp recruited 10th grade students heading into the 11th grade and focused on techniques to improve student’s study habits, skills, and knowledge base in order to become better prepared students as they enter the last years of high school.

During camp, students were split into small groups. Each group was led by current college students who spent the entire day with GEAR UP scholars in a mentoring role. The college students were available to discuss information about college and future plans as well as answer any questions that GEAR UP students had about college life.

Over the three day experience, students attended workshops on topics such as: “Personal Essay Writing,” “ACT Math and English Readiness,” “Binder Organization,” “Admissions Process,” and “Financial Aid Process.” They also participated in a presentation taught by USU CHaSS Associate Professor, Matt Sanders, on “Becoming a Learner.” Matt spoke about how there is more to learning than just sitting in a classroom as well as the process of constantly learning. In addition to workshops and presentations, scholars attended a “Human Library” which brought together professionals from different fields of study for students to ask questions about schooling, choosing a major, college life, scholarships, and financial aid.

While academics was the main focus throughout each day, scholars were also able to spend time exploring Green Canyon through Geocaching and participating in a selfie scavenger hunt around campus. Students finished up their last night at Aggie Summit with a cultural event that brought them together as friends and scholars.
Utah State University STARS! GEAR UP hosted its inaugural Engineering Camp in summer 2016. GEAR UP scholars, entering the 8th grade, took part in the camp. Engineering Camp focused on water engineering and watershed sciences. Students were placed in five groups for engineering activities. Each group was led by a GEAR UP science teacher. Throughout the week, students spent time in the lab and across the Cache Valley conducting experiments on different water sources. Students ventured from the Logan River in Logan Canyon to Logan and Hyrum waste water management plants to evaluate turbidity, alkalinity, PH, and microorganisms. In the lab, students learned about urban versus natural watersheds, drinking water quality, over-use of resources, and the consequences that follow when communities do not protect their water resources.

In groups, the scholars took all of the information they collected and posed experimental questions about water systems, the organisms that live there, and environmental factors. Students created research posters about the data they collected, their questions and posed their hypothesized explanations. Each group presented their question, as well as their hypothesized answer to Jagath Kaluarachchi, Senior Associate Dean of the College of Engineering, on the last day of their camp experience.

Beyond their academic learning, students enjoyed quality time exploring Logan’s First Dam, playing games, such as water balloon volleyball, and building rockets in the evenings. While students worked on building friendships and rockets, teachers attended professional development seminars. During the seminars, teachers learned about the new Utah Science with Engineering Education (SEEd) standards adopted in 2015. Teachers explored teaching techniques following these new standards and best practices. Teachers also worked on creating lesson plans to use in their own classrooms.

This professional development helped to foster a sustainable environment full of the science and engineering concepts students learned during camp.

Overall Engineering Camp fostered an environment of learning and exploration of potential careers and majors for the students in the future.

APP Camp

From June 27 to August 1, 2016 Utah State University STARS! GEAR UP hosted its first ever APP Camp. Thirteen female 11th grade GEAR UP scholars attended the week long camp where they learned to develop applications using Java Script, a programming language used to create dynamic computer applications. The students programmed 13 applications during their stay at USU. APP camp catered to upper level high school females teaching them how to code as well as how to mentor their younger peers in the development of APPs. During the day, the scholars attended APP coding development training along with their teachers.

In the evenings, friendships were forged as the students took part in circuit sewing, sewing light circuits into bracelets, cardboard canoe building, and other team-building activities. Following the camp, the teachers who attended APP camp at USU implemented their own school-based APP camps with the help of the 11th grade GEAR UP scholars.
Youth Leadership Summit

USU STARS! GEAR UP sent six students to the 2016 NCCEP/GEAR UP Youth Leadership Summit (YLS) in Washington, DC. These students were part of 150 students from GEAR UP programs across the United States who were selected for this leadership training. YLS is a 3 1/2 day training experience focused on giving GEAR UP students resources and tools to act as leaders in their schools and communities. NCCEP offered students the opportunity to develop their unique leadership skills, create a supportive network of leaders with other GEAR UP students, launch discussions about issues that affect them and their schools every day, and receive the tools and training to make positive changes. Speakers at the conference included Jim White, real life hero and coach who inspired “McFarland USA,” Nick Cannon, host of America’s Got Talent, Rev. Jeffrey Brown and others.

Piper Christian (Logan High School), Joel Godoy (Wendover High School), Carmen Guadarrama (Logan High School), K’Leigh Halliday (Gunnison Valley High School), Jason Shepherd (Wendover High School), and Caitlin Tippetts (Manti High School) attended YLS. Two of the six students (Piper Christian & Carmen Guadarrama) were selected to visit with Congressman Rob Bishop as part of the conference Youth Leadership Summit events. Piper and Carmen met with Tyler Schroeder, Defense Legislative Fellow, in Congressman Rob Bishop’s Washington, DC office. They expressed how GEAR UP has helped broaden their college aspirations since beginning the program in middle school. The students shared their personal experiences of attending college campuses and learning about ways to pay for college through financial aid and scholarships. They also told their personal stories about attending summer camps and learning better academic habits so that they are better prepared for post-secondary education.

YLS provides a high-quality, national-level interactive training experience and peer-to-peer learning opportunity for 9th–12th grade high school students who are currently participating in GEAR UP programs. Each day of YLS was carefully planned by the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships and offered sessions to provide students with opportunities to maximize and identify their individual leadership skills. The 2016 YLS was sponsored by Texas Instruments.
DIA College Camp

From July 11-14, 2016, fifteen Dual Immersion Academy (DIA) students attended College Camp by visiting Brigham Young University, Utah Valley University, the University of Utah, Utah State University, and Weber State University. Each school provided its own unique experience for the students. Utah Valley University provided a presentation from the Latino Initiative about the importance of college. The students learned about how the brain functions led by the BYU’s Neuroscience Club. Weber State talked about financial aid and the U of U had a mining engineering activity prepared for the DIA visit.

At USU, DIA’s visit started with a glimpse of campus where students received an glimpse of where they could pursue a degree in the future. The tour was followed by a trip to the Reptile Lab with Graduate Student, Andrew Durso, who taught about and showed a few reptiles. The students were able to handle some of the reptiles themselves. DIA students then headed off to the Physiology Lab with Dr. Andy Anderson to learn about Mammalian Biology. Each DIA student was partnered with an undergraduate aide who facilitated the dissection of a sheep eye as well as a pig respiratory system and heart. The group then traveled to the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, where students had a tour of the museum and shared their favorite works of art with peers.

The day ended with a journey out to the Benson Marina where DIA students could paddleboard, canoe, or swim. By participating in College Camp at various Utah universities, students made personal connections with each college and were exposed to STEM majors and potential career pathways for their futures.
Mount Logan Middle School (MLMS) held a Summer 2016 Learning Academy for current 7th and 8th graders. Three different class sessions were held, with each session running for four days. Forty-five GEAR UP students participated in classroom activities and exercises exploring college and careers, as well as various field trips around Cache Valley. Students visited the Space Dynamics Lab at Utah State University where they learned about different career opportunities in Engineering and other related fields. They traveled to the Cache Airport and Ridgeline Helicopter School where they explored and discussed aviation careers. At the Bridgerland Applied Technology College (BATC), scholars experienced various areas of study including: Business, Health, Welding, Food Services, Meat Cutting, Dental Assisting, Automotive Repair, and Drafting. The Summer Learning Academy culminated with a visit to Utah State University. At USU, students participated in a workshop put together by Career Services that showcased how passions and interests can shape future careers. The students also explored different museums at USU, showcasing many different arts and cultures that USU has to offer. At the end of each week, students had a new appreciation for higher education and plans for continuing their educational aspirations after high school.
Greenpower Training

In June 2016, GEAR UP teachers and Site Coordinators came to USU for training in the Greenpower electric car program. Teachers spent two days learning about the STEM-based curriculum that will allow their students to design, build, and race electric cars. Training included the Seimens Solid Edge 3-D design program and how students will be using Solid Edge to help design their cars, as well as alternative power sources and rules and regulations.

The group toured the USU Electric Vehicle & Roadway (EVR) Research Facility & Racetrack where Dr. Zeljko Pantic and Ryan Bohm shared insights about the EVR research and how the facility will lead the nation in transportation innovations. Teachers learned about alternative power and ways to help their students think about ways to make their cars faster and more efficient. Each teacher had the opportunity to drive a Greenpower electric car on the EVR track. A discussion ensued as the training culminated with information about the newest Greenpower event. This will be a partnership between GreenpowerUSA, Sports Car Club of America (SCCA), and IndyCar, where two USU STARS! GEAR UP teams will be allowed to take their car, be partnered with an Indy 500 team, and race around the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in May 2017.

Ranjit Sidhu, President and CEO of NCCEP rides in a greenpower car

By participating in the DLI, Superintendent Schofield will:

• Deepen the relationship with the USU GEAR UP program team, resulting in data-driven results with a wider impact;
• Increase the effectiveness of the USU GEAR UP program among all of the partnering schools while collaborating to implement a broad range of best practice strategies, approaches, and programs for students;
• Reserve time to reflect on and analyze programs that work for creating a high-performing and sustainable college-going culture with other Superintendents/Directors that are part of GEAR UP;
• Define and solve problems that hinder student success with a group of trusted colleagues; and,
• Expand the national network of colleagues, sharing ideas, questions, challenges, and successes through a guided series of cohort interactions.

USU STARS! GEAR UP Administrative Team

Program Director Cohort 1 - Eric Packenham
Program Director Cohort 2 - Jim Dorward
Program Coordinator Cohort 1 - Melia Balls
Program Coordinator Cohort 2 - Heather Ericson
Business Officer Cohort 1 - Brent Baum
Business Officer Cohort 2 - Meg Boudrore
Data Analyst - Doug Reiter
Web Developer - Zachary Stocks
Staff Assistant - Sandra Martinez
Office Assistant - Rachel Ward

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

Frank Schofield, Logan City School District Superintendent, attended the prestigious 2016-2017 GEAR UP/NCCEP District Leadership Institute (DLI) in Washington, DC, in July. The DLI is an innovative program for the GEAR UP community that seeks to maximize the talent and leadership skills of district leaders serving GEAR UP students.

Superintendent Schofield participated in DLI courses that initiate and engage a learning community of senior-level leaders in profound learning experiences focused on creating, sustaining, and strengthening the college-going culture in Utah State University STARS! GEAR UP schools. The DLI examines the unique role of district leaders to leverage the impact that GEAR UP’s resources provide in creating systemic change resulting in positive and sustainable impacts on students’ college and career readiness. The DLI combines training opportunities for cohort problem-solving discussions throughout the year, and collaboration activities between GEAR UP program directors, and district leaders. DLI also offers the benefits of a nationwide, tight-knit professional learning community that creates high-leverage professional learning and builds capacity for leading a coherent college readiness strategy.

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