On November 20th, Utah State’s Admissions office hosted their Annual Diversity Day. Diversity Day is a one-day program designed to provide first generation and multicultural high school students with information, exposure, and experiences about college life at Utah State University (USU). There were approximately 150 students from both Utah and Idaho schools, many of which were GEAR UP Scholars. Throughout the experience, the students attended workshops about college life, financial aid and scholarships, and student services and opportunities. GEAR UP student groups were led by current college undergraduates, allowing students the opportunity to make personal connections and receive near-peer interactions as well as answers to their questions.

The following is a quote from Kris Monson, GEAR UP Site Coordinator for Logan High School. “It was outstanding!!! I fought back tears as I watched the quiet, shy students get up and dance with their groups at the end, their faces radiating hope and joy. They made new friends and new commitments. They are making the choice to go to college, because they saw other people in their own situations that were able to achieve their dreams. As the scholarships were passed out, several of my students asked when they could apply. ALL have asked to come back next year. It

Top: (L to R) Bjorn Rodriguez, Daniela Barrera, Angie Pacheco, Rene Hernandez, Christina Nguyen, Deija Trujillo, and Alexa Black holding their scholarship letters. Left: (L to R) Ashley Hernandez, Bryden Yow, and Jaslyn Masina participating in Diversity Day.
The tremendous support that our Superintendent Management Team (SMT) provides to the GEAR UP program ensures that all activities align with one of the three GEAR UP goals. The dialogue is framed around how each district/school plan is addressing these program components: comprehensive mentoring, counseling, parental involvement, and outreach and supportive services which include financial aid counseling, information and activities regarding college admissions, achievement tests and application procedures. The SMT participates in these regular meetings to monitor the blueprint for GEAR UP implementation and to make changes as the cohort reaches milestones throughout the school year. This forum also provides for the SMT to share best practices on how the GEAR UP Site Coordinator, the data specialist, and the School Counselors work collaboratively with the school’s administration and other teachers to achieve GEAR UP goals.

Utah College Application Week

Utah College Application Week (UCAW) gives every high school senior in a participating school the opportunity to apply to college during the school day. Now in its third year, UCAW is in 25 districts and 84 schools across the state, and takes place the weeks of November 9-20, 2015. UCAW is coordinated by the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE) and is part of the American College Application Campaign and focuses on first-generation and low income students who are less likely to apply and enroll in college. The USU STARS! GEAR UP partners with USHE to provide the UCAW “mock application” experience to the 3,000 plus students in the cohort in hopes that when they become high school seniors they will be familiar with the college application process and will increase the state’s number of students applying to college. In total, 6 USU STARS! GEAR UP schools participated in this event.

On November 18th, one of those schools, Dual Immersion Academy (DIA), held a Mock College Application Night for GEAR UP families to learn more about going to college. The event, attended by DIA’s parents and students, used STEP UP books to learn more about Utah’s colleges and Universities. Students were then able to fill out an application to the school that interested them most. Throughout the event, students and their parents had the opportunity ask questions about college, and address concerns.

Left: Jorge Topete and his mother going over practice college applications.
Below: Brenda Gonzalez and her parents receiving information about applications.
The theme of this year’s UCTM conference was Principles to Action. Twenty-eight participants attended the session Developing the Vertex Formula Meaningfully for Learners which was sponsored by GEAR UP. Dr. Sheryl Rushton shared techniques that provided educators with a sequenced approach to quadratics that help students develop conceptual understanding of the vertex formula. The session was excellent and received great feedback: “Where were you when I was in math? I might have learned more!”.

Thank you Dr. Rushton for providing meaningful experiences for teachers who in turn impact the lives of our students.

Above: (L to R) Anne-Marie Davis and Kris Monson practice using a new teaching technique.

Below: AVID participants work together to stack cups using string.

A-grade Professional Development Day

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a global nonprofit organization that operates with one guiding principle: Hold students accountable to the highest standards provide academic and social support, and they will rise to the challenge. AVID’s kindergarten through higher education system brings research-based curriculum and strategies to students each day that develop critical thinking, literacy, and math skills across all content areas.

Jim Dorward and Heather Ericson attended the AVID Professional Learning Day in Salt Lake City recently to learn more about the college readiness system and how it works to ensure students are college-ready by equipping them with the skills, academic behaviors, and college knowledge necessary to succeed at every level from elementary school to college. The USU STARS! GEAR UP promotes college readiness to ensure that students in the cohorts develop a level of preparation they need to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education coursework at a college or university.

Above: (L to R) Anne-Marie Davis and Kris Monson practice using a new teaching technique.

Below: AVID participants work together to stack cups using string.
October 24th marked the exhibition of USU STARS! GEAR UP Greenpower cars. Ten middle and high schools along with three elementary schools from across Utah participated in exhibition races throughout the day at the Historic Wendover Airfield in Wendover, Utah. Students and teachers alike had a chance to experience Greenpower with races in both the F24 and Goblin car category. Goblins are the elementary school category of kit cars aimed at students 9-11 year of age. Students had the opportunity to learn about how their car performed and plan to take this knowledge back to make improvements for the next race. The opening and closing ceremonies took place in the historic Enola Gay Hangar. Participants were rewarded for their many hours of designing, building and driving the Greenpower cars.

A special thanks is given to honored guests Gayle Bowen, John Devitry, Mike Brown, from Siemens International, and Mike Evans and Jacob Boyett, from Greenpower USA. Their mentoring and expertise helped this event exceptional. The many hours volunteered to make this event a huge success are greatly appreciated.

The next USU STARS! GEAR UP Greenpower Exhibition is tentatively scheduled for spring 2016.

https://utahstars.usu.edu/students/