



PRESS RELEASE

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**CONCORD UNIVERSITY RECEIVES FEDERAL GEAR UP GRANT TOTALING
MORE THAN \$20 MILLION**

ATHENS, W.Va. – Concord University is receiving a federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) partnership grant for seven years totaling more than \$20 million (about \$2.9 million per year). Concord, in partnership with New River Community and Technical College, will serve students in Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming County schools.

“Concord is thrilled to receive a federal GEAR UP grant, which will allow us to change and strengthen the college-going culture in southern West Virginia as we work closely with our county school partners,” says Dr. Sarah Beasley, Concord University’s VP of Student Affairs and principal investigator of the GEAR UP grant. “We have a 150-year history of providing college access to students in this region, and we look forward to 150 more years as we help shape the future success of West Virginia students.”

U.S. Senators Capito and Manchin formally announced the GEAR UP grant on September 14. Concord University President Kendra Boggess expressed her gratitude for their support.

“Senators Capito and Manchin have continuously supported the growth and outreach of Concord University, and we are thankful for their dedication to higher education. Because of this GEAR UP grant, Concord can continue to serve the needs of southern West Virginia students,” President Boggess said.

The overall goals of the GEAR UP program are to 1) increase academic performance and preparation for postsecondary education; 2) increase the rate of high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education; and 3) increase GEAR UP students’ and their families’ knowledge of postsecondary options, preparation, and financing.

“Mercer County Schools is excited to partner with Concord University and GEAR UP to support college and career readiness to our students by preparing them for education and training beyond high school,” says Mercer County Superintendent Ed Toman.

This discretionary grant program provided by the [U.S. Department of Education](#) serves an entire cohort of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follows them through high school and even into their freshmen year of college.

“Wyoming County Schools is very excited to renew a partnership with the GEAR UP Program,” says Wyoming County Superintendent Mrs. Deirdre Cline. “The added opportunity for post-secondary planning and exploration that GEAR UP provides will help us enhance our efforts of preparing students for life-long success.”

The college-going rate in West Virginia has fallen almost 10 percentage points over the last 10 years, and according to research provided by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, southern West Virginia rates tend to be lower than the state average, which is now 45.9 percent. In this critical time, programs like GEAR UP are crucial to serving the needs of our region.



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