

Utah's Statewide GEAR UP Education Program (Utah GEAR UP) has served students in their last year of high school since 2011-12, and those who continued to their first year of college since 2012-13. This report presents information about college enrollment rates and outcomes during the students' first year of college.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND PERSISTENCE

Utah GEAR UP collects data on college enrollment using the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), a student senior exit survey and confirmatory phone calls the following fall, and from GEAR UP staff serving students in their first year of college. On the left side of Figure 1, college enrollment rates (according to NSC data only) are presented, along with persistence rates on the right.

The highest college enrollment rates were evident among the first group of seniors served by the program. Note that students who were seniors at that time may have already overcome any academic hurdles they encountered earlier in school (before GEAR UP implementation). This would mean they were students who were less at-risk of dropping out of high school or not enrolling in college compared with Utah GEAR UP students recruited earlier in their academic career (that GEAR UP may have helped prevent from dropping out). However, the following three years of seniors served also show a small decline in college enrollment.

This may be due in part to the Latter-Day Saint (LDS) population served by Utah GEAR UP, who may choose to attend a religious mission after high school rather than immediately enrolling in college. Although these rates reflect use of NSC data only, the other sources used by Utah GEAR UP show similar college enrollment trends. As might be expected based on the decreasing college enrollment rates, the percent of former Utah GEAR UP seniors who both enrolled in and persisted to a second year of college has decreased.

However, when examining persistence, specifically of students who had enrolled in college their first fall after high school, persistence remained much more stable.

Figure 1. College enrollment and persistence

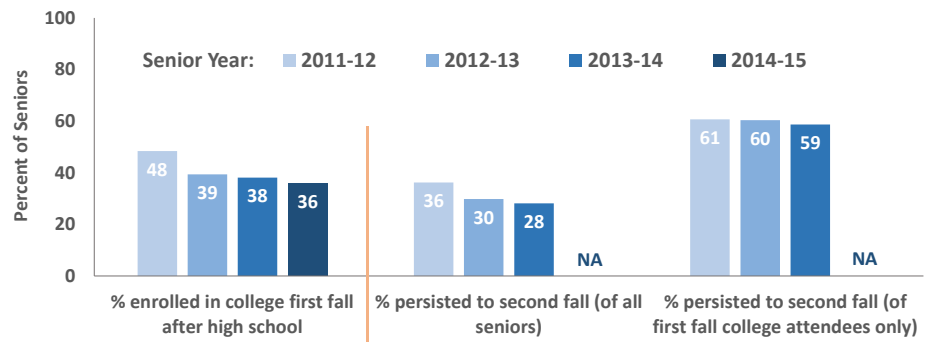
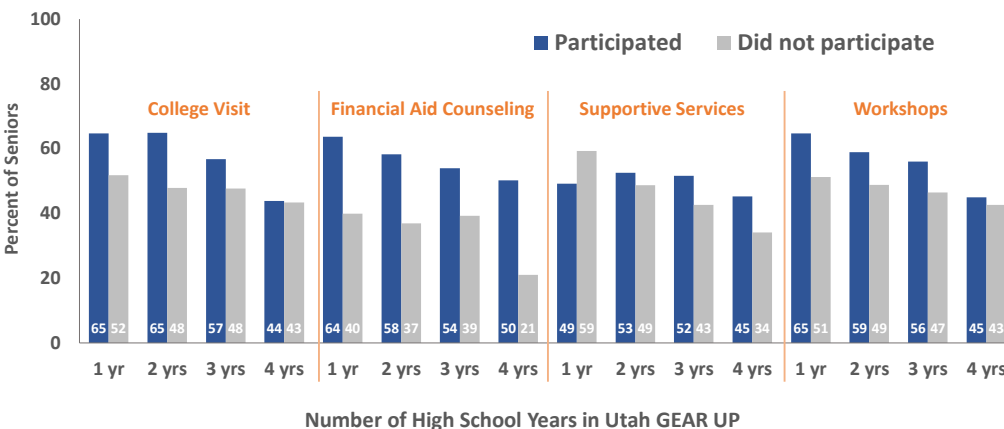


Figure 2. GEAR UP participation, years in program, and college enrollment



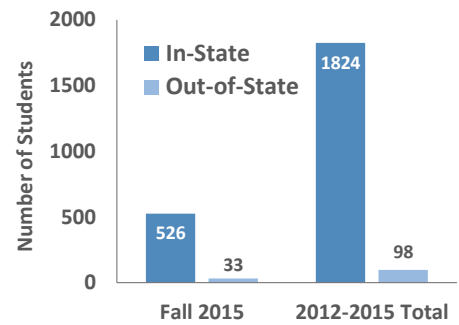
GEAR UP SERVICE PARTICIPATION

Figure 2 presents college enrollment rates by Utah GEAR UP seniors in terms of both the number of years that those seniors had been a part of Utah GEAR UP during high school, and in terms of services in which they participated during that time. Note that some of the groups of seniors participating in a given activity who had been in GEAR UP for four years represent fewer than 100 students, so these results should be interpreted with

caution. The most notable differences in college enrollment rates are evident when comparing those who did and did not participate in financial aid counseling. GEAR UP students who participated in financial aid counseling were substantially more likely to enroll in college, and this held true for students in GEAR UP for any number of years. Among seniors who participated in supportive services, it appears the benefits of these services were not realized if they had only been in GEAR UP for one year (i.e., began participating during their senior year), however did relate to college enrollment among seniors who had been a part of GEAR UP for more than one year.

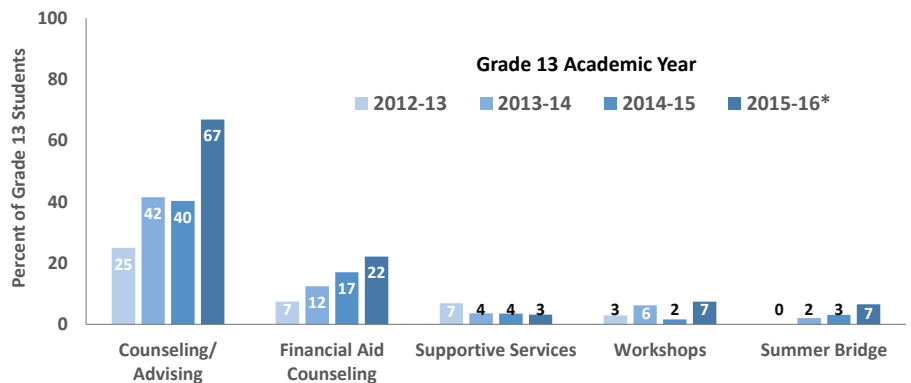
Utah GEAR UP has also served 1,922 students in their first year of college (referred to as Grade 13) since they began implementing the First-Year Services (FYS) component of the program during the 2012-13 school year. Figure 3 shows the number of students served during the most recent year, as well as overall. In addition to services provided at Utah Valley University, where the GEAR UP grant is administered, services are structured in conjunction with partnerships at Weber State University, Salt Lake Community College, Utah State University, and the San Juan Foundation. Utah GEAR UP also provides some FYS services to students who attend colleges where no such relationships exist, such as several out of state institutions. Such services are provided via telephone, texting, or internet.

Figure 3. First-Year Services students



FYS services include individual counseling, financial aid counseling, supportive services such as ACT preparation for students planning to transfer from a two-year to four-year college, workshops pertaining to topics such as senior transition or choosing a major, and Summer Bridge programs at various campuses. Figure 4 presents the percent of Grade 13 students who participated in each of the FYS services indicated. Among the students served, program coverage has increased, most notably in financial aid counseling and in counseling/advising, which also comprises the majority of the services offered as part of the FYS program

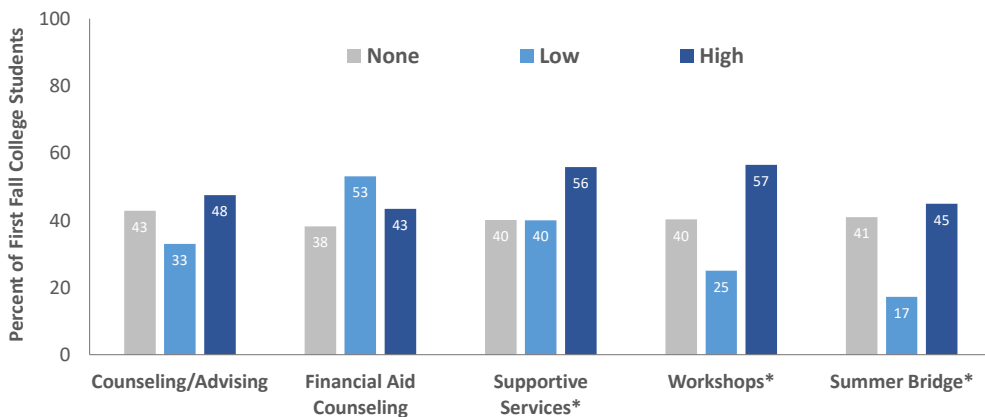
Figure 4. Grade 13 Service Participation



*Through June. All other years reflect August through July.

College persistence rates were examined in relation to FYS participation. For all activities other than Summer Bridge, hours of participation were categorized as *none*, *low* (0.5 or fewer hours), or *high* (greater than 0.5 hours). For Summer Bridge, which is a multi-day program, *low* participation is 10 or fewer hours, whereas *high* participation is greater than 10 hours; this generally reflected the difference between students who did not complete the entire Summer Bridge program and those who did. Note that some of the groups examined are comprised of fewer than 100 students, so it is difficult to draw conclusions. As shown in

Figure 5. College student persistence to second fall, by First-Year Service participation



*Fewer than 100 students participated

Figure 5, first-fall college students who participated in all services at high levels, except for financial aid counseling, showed higher persistence than those participating at low levels or not at all. The exception to this is seen among financial aid counseling participants, where low participation appeared to be sufficient to show a relationship with persistence, and no added benefit was evident from high levels of participation.

SUMMARY

Overall, the outcomes presented here for Utah GEAR UP services, both in pre-college years and First-Year Services, show that they are associated with higher college enrollment and persistence. Future analyses will expand upon these findings and examine student academic careers prior to senior year, and attempt to provide more understanding of courses taken, activity participation and other factors leading toward post-secondary outcomes of interest.