GEAR UP Evaluation:

Past, Present, & Future

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- ❖ GEAR UP Program Context
  - Program Characteristics
  - National Objectives
  - Approach & Strategies

- ❖ Themes for Discussion of Evaluation
  - Purpose
  - Questions
  - Resources
  - Methods

GEAR UP
Program Characteristics

❖ Size, Scope, Control
  - Federal program
  - Began in 1999
  - FY2011 appropriation ~$302M
    ~6.2% of 2010
  - Currently 211 grants
    42 state & 169 partnership
  - Over 700,000 students currently served
  - Average cost per student:
    state ~ $285 , partnership ~ $639

❖ GEAR UP Program Design

- College access
- Services to students, their parents, & participating school staff
- Low-income populations
- Cohort approach
- Begins in 7th grade or earlier
- Partnership model
- State and local grantees

GEAR UP
National Objectives

❖ Overall goal: Increase student achievement and success in post-secondary education

❖ Objectives are to increase...
- academic performance and college preparation
- rates of hs graduation & college enrollment
- student and family knowledge of college options, preparation, and financing

GEAR UP
Approach & Strategies

- ❖ Ensure access to rigorous college-prep courses

- ❖ Foster academic achievement – especially in math, science, reading, and technology

- ❖ Develop intensive academic enrichment programs supported by tutoring, mentoring, & counseling programs tailored to student needs

- ❖ Provide information early to students & parents about college options, required courses, & financial aid

GEAR UP
Approach & Strategies

❖ Provide financial support as an incentive and reward for college enrollment

❖ Build capacity for continuous school improvement through ongoing teacher & counselor professional development programs

❖ Use education/community/business partnerships as leverage for sustaining successful interventions

❖ Purpose
- Regulatory / compliance-driven
- Local program activity improvement

❖ Questions
- Descriptives of size, scope, implementation, & processes

❖ Resources
- Variation in local evaluation plans & resources
- First Evaluator's Institute in July 2003

❖ Methods
- Anecdotal evidence of impact
- Paper-based student records & spreadsheet data systems; beginnings of proprietary systems
- Descriptives of single groups
- Aggregate analyses

GEAR UP
Evaluation PRESENT

❖ Purpose
- Define program logic / alignment of elements
- Regulatory / compliance mechanism
- Local program activity improvement
- Identify & measure program outcomes – impact
- Contribute to college access program knowledge base

❖ Questions
- Descriptives size, scope, implementation, & processes
- Identification of program logic / alignment of elements
- Optimal program model, strategies, & processes
- Program and service impact & dosage effects

❖ Resources

- Increased DOE emphasis = more resources devoted
- Somewhat less variation in eval plans & resources
- Formalized , systemic curriculum re: GU eval via NCCEP, statewide summits & conferences, and state & multi-state conferences & consortia
- NCAN, RTI, AEA, NCCEP, ACT inc,
- External research reports

❖ Methods

- Relational data programs, proprietary systems, some spreadsheet systems.
- Descriptives of single groups & aggregate analyses
- Correlations of services & outcomes, use of baseline measures & comparison groups

GEAR UP
Evaluation FUTURE

❖ Purpose
- All current +
- Broaden areas for impact analysis
- Determine utility (value added & cost-benefit)

❖ Questions
- All current +
- Examine at both program- and service-levels...
  - Impact: Is GU working? What parts/elements?
  - Cost-effectiveness & Efficiency of processes: If it works, at what cost? Relative to alternatives?
  - Cost-benefit & utility: Return on investment? Value added?

❖ Resources
- All current + following wish list…
- Single site for static online evaluation resources needed
- Additional opportunities to convene & collaborate on eval projects across grants to share best practices
- Increased data sharing across grants for national GU impact evaluation

❖ Methods
- All current +
- Increased access to student-level data =
  - More sophisticated designs
  - Increased rigor and sensitivity of analyses
  - More studies across GEAR UP programs

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Questions?

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