

About the Data and Program Coordinator Focus Groups

In April 2024, GEAR UP New Mexico's (GUNM) external evaluation team, Xcalibur, conducted three focus groups with 11 Data and Program Coordinators from GEAR UP New Mexico partner schools. This report reflects the key take findings from the focus groups. The full report is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/GUNM-23-24-PCDC-FGs>



Key Findings

PCs are focused on meeting their targets for recruiting students for various GEAR UP activities and conferences. They shared memorable moments during the 23-24 school year. They also noted significant improvements in the levels of student engagement and participation in GEAR UP during the 23-24 school year.

- GEAR UP staff play a crucial role in providing information and support to students for college and career readiness.
- GEAR UP offers students invaluable opportunities, such as college visits, which broaden their horizons and give them hope for attending college.
- GEAR UP staff have built strong relationships with school staff, involving them in activities and initiatives. This collaboration has garnered support from educators, enhancing their engagement with the program.
- The biggest reward for PCs comes from witnessing the joy and excitement in students and parents during key milestones, such as applying to college, completing FAFSA, or attending college visits.
- PCs are dedicated to achieving their targets for recruiting students for various GEAR UP activities and conferences, such as bus tours, workforce activities, and STEM conferences.
- Recruiting students for GEAR UP bus tours proved difficult, particularly when tours conflicted with finals week, review periods, and sports or work commitments. The early departure times and inefficient coordination, such as inconvenient pickup and drop-off locations, further deterred participation.
- The grant's increased emphasis on career options alongside traditional college pathways has been a notable improvement. PCs appreciated the grant leadership's efforts to raise awareness about diverse postsecondary options.
- GEAR UP New Mexico leadership has made strides in providing clearer timelines and adhering to scheduled dates, which has helped PCs plan and prepare more effectively for events.
- PCs suggested that leadership provide more hands-on support to new coordinators, rather than directing them to resources or guidance documents.
- PCs expressed their plans to continue building relationships with students in the coming school year to boost student involvement in GEAR UP activities.