Hawai‘i Celebrates College Access Program That Serves Over 17,000 Students Each Year

Honolulu – Hawai‘i will be celebrating the success of three college-access programs during National GEAR UP Week 2013 starting September 23. Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide students and families the resources they need to succeed in college. Since its inception in 1999, GEAR UP has improved educational outcomes for millions of low-income students across the United States.

This year, over 17,000 students were served statewide by the three Hawai‘i GEAR UP programs (GEAR UP Hawai‘i, GEAR UP Waipahu and Nānākuli-Wai‘anae GEAR UP). The programs aim to broaden college awareness, expand academic readiness and increase postsecondary success among Hawai‘i’s public school students. The three Hawai‘i GEAR UP programs collaborate with the Hawaii State Department of Education (DOE) and the University of Hawai‘i (UH) System as well as the government, nonprofit and private sectors to provide information, encouragement, support, resources and services and help eliminate achievement gaps among groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

To celebrate National GEAR UP Week, GEAR UP will be collaborating with the DOE to host a legislative briefing at 9:30 a.m. on Sept. 24 at Waipahu High School’s Library. The focus of the briefing is to share how the three Hawai‘i GEAR UP programs are working to provide students and families the critical support and resources they need for postsecondary success. GEAR UP Waipahu students, including Juanito Moises, who received national recognition as the 2013 GEAR UP Youth of the Year, will also be present to talk about the impact that the GEAR UP program has had on their success in school.
In addition, GEAR UP Hawai‘i, the statewide GEAR UP program under Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education, will be hosting a special event for Step Up Scholars from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Sept. 28 at UH West O‘ahu. Step Up Scholars are students from the graduating classes of 2014 and 2015 who have pledged to earn the rigorous Board of Education Recognition Diploma. The event will provide these students and their families with information sessions, as well as a resource fair, geared to prepare them for college and careers. During the event, Lieutenant Governor Shan Tsutsui will present a proclamation in honor of National GEAR UP Week.

“GEAR UP Hawai‘i has been a critical program to assist in leading education reform efforts in college access and success. It is essential to reach the state’s goal of 55 percent of working age adults holding a two- or four-year college degree by 2025,” said Karen Lee, Executive Director of Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education, which oversees the statewide GEAR UP program. “The program works hand in hand with the University of Hawai‘i and the Hawai‘i State Department of Education to prepare Hawai‘i’s students to graduate from high school ready for college or a career, which is absolutely necessary to our state’s future.”

“The GEAR UP programs in our state have been instrumental in helping us to prepare our students for college and career success,” said DOE Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi. “By working hand in hand, our partnership has assisted us in increasing our students’ awareness of, preparedness for, and enrollment in postsecondary education.”

For more information about GEAR UP Hawai‘i, please contact Lesli Yogi, Business and Community Outreach Specialist, lyogi@hawaii.edu or go to http://gearup.hawaii.edu. For more information on GEAR UP Waipahu, please contact Erwin Legaspi, Project Director, gearup@hawaii.edu. For more information on Nānākuli-Wai‘anae GEAR UP, please contact Deelyn Ka‘aha‘aina, Program Manager, deelynnk@hawaii.edu. To learn more about the national GEAR UP program, please contact the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships at 202-530-1135 or www.edpartnerships.org.

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GEAR UP Hawai‘i is a program of Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education, a statewide partnership led by the Executive Office on Early Learning, the Hawai‘i State Department of Education and the University of Hawai‘i System that works to strengthen the education pipeline from early childhood through higher education so that all students achieve college and career success. Hawai‘i P-20’s partners share a sense
of urgency about the need to improve Hawai’i’s educational outcomes in an increasingly global economy, and have established a goal of 55 percent of Hawai’i’s working age adults having a two- or four-year college degree by 2025. For more information, visit http://www.p20hawaii.org.

The Hawaii State Department of Education is the 10th largest U.S. school district and the only statewide educational system in the country. It is comprised of 255 schools and serves more than 183,000 students. Hawaii’s public school system was established in 1840 by King Kamehameha III. To learn more, visit HawaiiPublicSchools.org.