

The Long Beach GEAR UP program aims to increase high school graduation and college enrollment among the students of the Norwalk La Mirada Unified School district. Long Beach GEAR UP began serving more than 1,600 students in sixth and seventh grade (837 and 767 students, respectively) during 2021-22. Nearly two-thirds of the students are of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, and nearly one-quarter are classified as Limited English Proficiency (LEP). During the first year of the program, nearly 90% of the students participated in at least one GEAR UP service. The most commonly utilized services were workshops (83%), primarily about careers, college systems, and A through G courses; and mentoring presentations and activities (79%).

Students were surveyed during spring of 2022, to gather information about their baseline knowledge and opinions regarding education and planning for their future; 76% of students responded to the survey. Among other topics, students were asked about their aspirations and expectations for their education. Nearly half the students indicated they would like to complete at least a four-year degree, and another 12% would like to attain a two-year degree or certificate. Of students who would like a four-year degree or higher, 36% ($n=168$) do not think they will do so.

The survey asked respondents to select reasons they might not enroll in college; they could select more than one response. The most common reasons selected overall were:

- *It costs too much/I cannot afford it* (33%)
- *My grades are not good enough* (30%)
- *I want/plan to work in a job that doesn't require more education* (21%).

Additional reasons selected were *I need to work* (15%), *Family or health issues* (12%), and *I want to join the military* (10%).

Responses for the three most common reasons were examined in relation to their educational aspirations and expectations. Among students who indicated they would like to earn a four-year degree or higher, reasons for not attending college

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College

Financial
Aid