

# GEAR UP VIRGINIA SCHOLARSHIP & GRANT





Before continuing, please read:

To apply for this scholarship or grant, a student must have been a member of the original 7<sup>th</sup> grade GEAR UP class in 2006-07, who graduates from a GEAR UP high school by August 2012.

# Contents

Introduction	3
<b>GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship</b>	4
Initial Scholarship Eligibility Requirements	4
Initial Scholarship Application Process	5
Scholarship Selection Process	5
Scholarship Selection Components	6
Scholarship Length and Award Amount	6
Frequently Asked Questions about the Scholarship	7
<b>GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant</b>	8
Grant Eligibility Requirements	8
Grant Application Process	9
Grant Selection Process	9
Grant Selection Components	10
Grant Length and Award Amount	10
Frequently Asked Questions about the Grant	11
Additional Important Information	12
Important Terms	13
Participating High Schools	14
Contact Information	14



Throughout this document, look for important notes marked with this graphic.

# GEAR UP Virginia

Virginia's GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) program has expanded the state's efforts to assist students from low-income families to attend and succeed in college by providing early intervention services and a scholarship program for eligible students who demonstrate financial need.

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## GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship and Grant

### *GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship*

A competitive college financial aid program available to eligible GEAR UP students who demonstrate high financial need.

### *GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant*

A one-time grant available to eligible GEAR UP students who do not qualify for the GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship. Financial need is not required for this grant, but will be considered when determining recipients.

# GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship (Need-based)

The GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship is a competitive college financial aid program available to eligible GEAR UP students who demonstrate high financial need. Scholarships are awarded based on a variety of factors including financial need, participation in GEAR UP activities, and academic preparation and performance.



**Scholarship awards are contingent upon funding and are not guaranteed.**

## *Initial Scholarship Eligibility Requirements*

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**To be eligible for consideration for a GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship, a student must:**

- A. Have been a member of the original 7<sup>th</sup> grade GEAR UP class in 2006-07
- B. Have a signed student information release form on file at SCHEV
- C. Be an active participant in GEAR UP-endorsed program activities



**Participation will be considered when selecting scholarship recipients. Students are encouraged to participate in all GEAR UP-endorsed activities.**

- D. Graduate with a high school diploma from a participating GEAR UP high school by August 31, 2012 and have a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or above by the end of fall 2011
- E. Submit a completed GEAR UP Virginia award application and all required documents to SCHEV by the determined deadline
- F. Be accepted and enrolled at least half-time in a degree, diploma, or certificate program at an eligible institution no later than the fall 2013 academic term

An eligible institution is one that:

- 1) is physically located in the state of Virginia, accredited, and recognized by SCHEV
- 2) participates in Title IV federal student financial assistance programs
- 3) agrees to participate in the GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship program

*Exceptions:*

- a. Students may be eligible to receive the grant at an eligible institution located in a state that borders Virginia – North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Maryland (including the District of Columbia). These institutions must meet eligibility requirements 2 and 3 listed above.

- b. Students interested in a program not offered at an eligible institution may be eligible to receive the grant at an institution that is not located in Virginia that participates in the Academic Common Market (ACM) program and that otherwise meets the requirements listed above.



**For more information about ACM, visit [www.schev.edu](http://www.schev.edu) (click on Financial Aid).**

- G. Be eligible for the Pell grant as determined by the U.S. Department of Education
- H. Successfully complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and be awarded a Pell grant



**Check with your preferred institution for financial aid priority dates.**

## **---- Initial Scholarship Application Process ----**

GEAR UP Virginia award applications will be available at GEAR UP high schools and online during students' senior year of high school. To apply for a scholarship, students must submit an application along with required documents no later than the determined deadline. The required documents will be specified in the application packet.

### **Scholarship Selection Process**

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All GEAR UP students who submit an application with required documents by the deadline will be considered for a scholarship. Complete application packets will be reviewed by the scholarship committee. The committee will take into consideration each student's financial need, cumulative grade point average through fall 2011, GEAR UP participation record, recommendation letter, and essay.

Once the scholarship recipients are selected, *provisional* scholarship award letters will be mailed to their home address. Final eligibility and award amounts are contingent upon verification of enrollment and financial aid information submitted by institutions. Students who apply but do not qualify for a scholarship will automatically be considered for the GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant.



**The number of scholarships that are awarded will depend upon how many eligible students apply and the availability of funds.**

**Scholarship recipients cannot also receive an Achievement Grant.**

## Selection Components

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- Ranked in order of importance:
- 1) Financial need
  - 2) Cumulative grade point average
  - 3) GEAR UP participation
  - 4) Student essay
  - 5) Recommendation letter



**Student essays and recommendation letters will be an important factor in the final selection of scholarship recipients.**

## ---- Scholarship Length and Award Amount ----

An eligible recipient may only receive this scholarship for up 5 years or the granting of their first bachelor's degree, whichever comes first.

GEAR UP Virginia students who are Pell grant eligible and meet all scholarship requirements may receive a scholarship equal to the maximum annual Pell grant award as determined by Congress each academic year. This amount may vary depending on the student's enrollment and financial aid information, which will be verified by the institution each academic term. The annual award amount will be divided into individual payments per semester or quarter. The award is contingent upon fund availability and changes to the federal guidelines.

# Frequently Asked Questions About the Scholarship

## How do students apply?

To apply for a GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship, students must submit a completed GEAR UP award application along with required documents no later than the determined deadline. Applications will be available at GEAR UP high schools and online during students' senior year of high school.

## How do students know if they are eligible for the federal Pell grant?

Pell grant eligibility is determined by the information the student provides on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) determines the student's Pell grant eligibility.

## Are non-Pell students eligible for this scholarship?

Only students who are eligible to receive a Pell grant are eligible for consideration for a scholarship; however, all students are encouraged to apply as they may be eligible for a GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant.

## What is the amount of the award?

GEAR UP Virginia students who are Pell eligible and meet all requirements may receive up to the maximum annual Pell grant award as determined by Congress each academic year. This amount may vary depending on the student's enrollment and financial aid information, which will be verified by the institution. The annual award amount will be divided into individual payments per semester or quarter. The award is contingent upon fund availability and changes to the federal guidelines.

## How is the scholarship awarded?

Scholarship awards will be forwarded directly to participating institutions on behalf of the eligible student shortly after verification of enrollment and financial aid information is received from the institution each academic term.

## Is the scholarship renewable?

The GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship is renewable each academic year based on the availability of funds, provided that students enroll at least half-time in a degree, diploma, or certificate program at an eligible institution by the fall 2013 academic term. To be eligible to renew the scholarship, students must meet all renewal requirements, which will be included in the initial scholarship award packets mailed to students. Students who wish to renew their scholarship must submit a completed GEAR UP Scholarship renewal application along with other required documents each year by the determined deadline. A recipient may only receive this scholarship for up to 5 years or the granting of their first bachelor's degree, whichever comes first. It shall not be awarded to students enrolled in post-baccalaureate programs (e.g. graduate degrees or certificate programs).

# GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant

The GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant is a financial aid program available to eligible GEAR UP students who do not qualify for the GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship. Financial need is not required for this program; however, it will be considered. Students must use this grant during the 2012-13 or 2013-14 academic year of their postsecondary education. Students must contact SCHEV to indicate the institution and academic term in which the funds should be sent.



**Grant awards are contingent upon funding and are not guaranteed.**

## Grant Eligibility Requirements

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**To be eligible for consideration for a GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant, a student must:**

- A. Have been a member of the original 7<sup>th</sup> grade GEAR UP class in 2006-07
- B. Have a signed student information release form on file at SCHEV
- C. Be an active participant in GEAR UP-endorsed program activities



**Participation will be considered when selecting scholarship recipients. Students are encouraged to participate in all GEAR UP-endorsed activities.**

- D. Graduate with a high school diploma from a participating GEAR UP high school by August 31, 2012 and have a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or above by the end of fall 2011
- E. Submit a completed GEAR UP Virginia award application and all required documents to SCHEV by the determined deadline
- F. Be accepted and enrolled at least half-time in a degree, diploma, or certificate program at an eligible institution no later than the fall 2013 academic term

An eligible institution is one that:

- 1) is physically located in the state of Virginia, accredited, and recognized by SCHEV
- 2) participates in Title IV federal student financial assistance programs
- 3) agrees to participate in the GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship program

*Exceptions:*

- a. Students may be eligible to receive the grant at an eligible institution located in a state that borders Virginia – North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Maryland (including the District of Columbia). These institutions must meet eligibility requirements 2 and 3 listed above.

- b. Students interested in a program not offered at an eligible institution may be eligible to receive the grant at an institution that is not located in Virginia that participates in the Academic Common Market (ACM) program and that otherwise meets the requirements listed above.



**For more information about ACM, visit [www.schev.edu](http://www.schev.edu) (click on Financial Aid)**

- G. Successfully complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and all requirements necessary to be awarded federal financial aid



**Students are not required to have financial need to receive this grant; however, financial need will be considered when determining recipients.**

**Check with your preferred institution for financial aid priority dates.**

## ---- Grant Application Process ----

GEAR UP Virginia award applications will be available at GEAR UP high schools and online during students' senior year of high school. To apply for a grant, students must submit an application along with required documents no later than the determined deadline. The required documents will be specified in the application packet.

### **Grant Selection Process**

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Students who apply but are not eligible for a GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship will automatically be considered for a one-time GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant. Complete application packets will be reviewed by the scholarship committee. The committee will take into consideration each student's financial need, cumulative grade point average through fall 2011, GEAR UP participation record, recommendation letter and essay to determine grant recipients. Priority for this grant will be given to students who have financial need. SCHEV will award as many grants as available funds allow. Once grant recipients are identified, *provisional* award letters will be mailed to their permanent home address. Final eligibility and award amounts are contingent upon verification of enrollment and financial aid information submitted by institutions.



**The number of grants that are awarded will depend upon how many eligible students apply and the availability of funds.**

## Selection Components

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- Ranked in order of importance:
- 1) Financial need
  - 2) Cumulative grade point average
  - 3) GEAR UP participation
  - 4) Student essay
  - 5) Recommendation letter



**Student essays and recommendation letters will be an important factor in the final selection of grant recipients.**

### ---- Grant Length and Award Amount ----

Students who are eligible to receive the GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant could receive an estimated \$750 one-time award to use during the 2012-13 or 2013-14 academic year in postsecondary education. The award amount may vary depending on financial aid information verified by the institution. The award is contingent upon fund availability and changes to the federal guidelines.

# Frequently Asked Questions About the Grant

## **How do students apply?**

To apply for a GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant, students must submit a GEAR UP award application along with required documents no later than the determined deadline. Applications will be available at GEAR UP high schools and online during students' senior year of high school.

## **What is the amount of the award?**

GEAR UP Virginia students who are eligible for the grant and meet all requirements may receive an estimated \$750 one-time grant to be used during the 2012-13 or 2013-14 academic year in postsecondary education. This amount may vary depending on financial aid information that will be verified by each institution. The award is contingent upon fund availability and changes to the federal guidelines.

## **How is the grant awarded?**

Grant awards will be forwarded directly to participating institutions on behalf of the eligible student shortly after verification of enrollment and financial aid information.

## **What is the difference between the GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant and the Scholarship?**

The Achievement Grant is a one-time award that is not dependent on financial need. The Scholarship is based on financial need and is renewable provided that students continue to meet eligibility requirements.

## **Does the Achievement Grant have to be paid back?**

The Achievement Grant does not have to be repaid.

## **Is the Achievement Grant renewable?**

This grant is not renewable; however, students have the option to use the grant during the 2012-13 or 2013-14 academic year of their postsecondary education as long as they meet all eligibility requirements.



## Additional Important Information

Scholarships and grants are contingent upon available funding and changes to the federal guidelines and are not guaranteed.

The number of scholarships and grants that are awarded will depend upon how many eligible students apply and the availability of funds. There is a possibility that not all students will receive an award.

Participation counts! Participation will be based on what is reported by the high school coordinators.

Students will submit one application with required documents and the scholarship committee will determine which award (if any) the student is eligible to receive.

Students who decide not to enroll at an institution immediately after graduation, but enroll by the fall 2013 academic term, are still required to complete a FAFSA (during 2012) for their initial application. Students who decide to postpone enrollment will not have an additional year to apply for an award.

Students who receive an initial scholarship or grant award letter will be considered *provisionally* eligible for an award until their postsecondary institution completes the verification process of enrollment and financial aid information. Final scholarship/grant eligibility and actual award amounts will be determined by verification of this information.

Achievement Grant recipients will be required to notify SCHEV/GEAR UP of the institution and academic term in which the funds should be sent.

# Important Terms

**Academic Common Market (ACM) program:** ACM is an arrangement among Southern states allowing students to pay in-state tuition rates at out-of-state schools while studying in select programs not available at Virginia public institutions.

**Academic Term:** A division of an academic year. These divisions may be called terms, semesters, quarters, or trimesters, depending on the type of institution.

**Academic Year:** A period of time schools use to measure a quantity of study. It typically begins in August or September and ends the following May.

**Expected Family Contribution (EFC):** The amount a family is expected to contribute toward the cost of attendance as determined by the federal methodology need analysis formula. The EFC includes the parent contribution and the student contribution, and depends on the student's dependency status, family size, number of family members in school, taxable and nontaxable income, and assets.

**Financial Aid:** Financial assistance in the form of scholarships, grants, work-study, and loans for education.

**Financial Need:** The difference between the cost of attendance at a college and the expected family contribution.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** A free application that must be completed by all students and parents who apply for federal student aid. It can be filled out online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

**Grant:** A form of financial aid that does not have to be repaid.

**Need-based:** A means of determining eligibility for certain types of financial aid using financial need as the determining factor.

**Postsecondary Education:** Education beyond high school.

**Scholarship:** A type of financial aid that the student does not have to repay.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** The SAR summarizes the information students include on the FAFSA. The SAR will provide a student's EFC and indicate whether the student is eligible for the Pell grant. Students should receive their SAR 4 to 6 weeks after submitting their FAFSA to the processor.

# Participating High Schools

## School Divisions

Buchanan County Public Schools  
Charlotte County Public Schools  
Charlottesville City Public Schools  
Chesterfield County Public Schools  
Cumberland County Public Schools  
Danville City Public Schools  
Grayson County Public Schools  
Greensville County Public Schools  
Hopewell City Public Schools  
King and Queen County Public Schools  
Lynchburg City Public Schools  
Martinsville City Public Schools  
Norton City Public Schools  
Nottoway County Public Schools  
Patrick County Public Schools  
Petersburg City Public Schools  
Pittsylvania County Public Schools  
Prince Edward County Public Schools  
Prince William County Public Schools  
Pulaski County Public Schools  
Scott County Public Schools  
Smyth County Public Schools  
Sussex County Public Schools  
Washington County Public Schools  
Westmoreland County Public Schools

## Schools

Council, Grundy, Hurley, and Twin Valley High Schools  
Randolph Henry High School  
Charlottesville High School  
Meadowbrook High School  
Cumberland County High School  
Galileo Magnet and George Washington High Schools  
Grayson County and Mt. Rogers High Schools  
Greensville County High School  
Hopewell High School  
Central High School  
E.C. Glass and Heritage High Schools  
Martinsville High School  
J. I. Burton High School  
Nottoway County High School  
Patrick County High School  
Petersburg High School  
Gretna High School  
Prince Edward County High School  
Freedom and Woodbridge High Schools  
Pulaski County High School  
Gate City, Rye Cove, and Twin Springs High Schools  
Marion and Northwood High Schools  
Sussex Central High School  
Holston and Patrick Henry High Schools  
Washington and Lee High School

## GEAR UP Scholarship Contact Information

**For more information about the GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship or Achievement Grant programs, contact the GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship administrator.**

Mailing Address: State Council of Higher Education for Virginia  
GEAR UP Scholarship Administrator  
101 N. 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
James Monroe Building, 10<sup>th</sup> Fl.  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Phone: (804)225-2600

Email: [GEARUPscholarship@schev.edu](mailto:GEARUPscholarship@schev.edu)

Website: [www.gearupva.com](http://www.gearupva.com)

## About SCHEV

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The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is the Commonwealth's coordinating body for higher education. SCHEV was established by the Governor and General Assembly in 1956. Then as now, our mission, which is outlined in the Code of Virginia, is "to promote the development of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education" in Virginia.



State Council of  
Higher Education for Virginia