

**August 9, 2006**

## **IDAHO RECEIVES \$18 MILLION GRANT FOR SCHOLARSHIPS, ACADEMIC COUNSELING**

IDAHO FALLS - The State of Idaho is the recipient of a six year, \$17.8 million federal grant aimed at helping low income students become better prepared for higher education, announced State Board of Education members.

The GEAR UP IDAHO grant allows schools with 50 percent of their students who qualify for free and reduced lunch to apply to become GEAR UP schools. Students in these schools will be eligible for greater career and academic counseling and post-secondary scholarships.

"This is one of the best things to happen for Idaho education," said Laird Stone, President of the State Board of Education. "This program will not only help students in particular Idaho schools, but all students by engaging students and parents throughout the state in counseling about the importance of education."

The GEAR UP program will begin with students starting this school year. The program focuses on talking with students beginning in middle school about the importance of post-secondary education. Close to 90 middle and high schools throughout the state are eligible. The grant funds additional counseling staff and sets up regional counseling centers throughout the state. The regional centers will also include creation of a community advisory committee to develop programs and strategies to best fit the needs of the local community. Using grant funds and partnering with Idaho's colleges and universities, the state will also begin a marketing campaign to help parents and students understand how education can benefit them as an individual as well as their community.

"The GEAR UP program shines because it relies on states and individual communities," said members of Idaho's Congressional delegation. "As we look as a nation to become more globally competitive, solutions are best fostered at a community level where teachers, parents, students and community leaders work together. This is an exciting opportunity for our state and we look forward to working with our state and local leaders to develop programs to help Idaho's students."

One of the most impressive aspects of the grant is half of the federal funds go directly to student scholarships. More than 600 students in participating schools will receive four year, renewable college scholarships up to \$16,000. Priority for the scholarships is based on financial need and academic preparation.

GEAR UP is a grant given by the US Department of Education. The Board applied for the grant by partnering with several educational agencies including the State Department of Education, Career Information Systems and the Division of Professional Technical Education. There is no direct cost to school districts. Forty-seven other states throughout the country have successfully modeled individual programs using GEAR UP funds.