



March 12, 2021

SUBMITTED VIA REGULATIONS.GOV

Daphne Garcia
Institute of Educational Sciences (IES)
550 12th Street, SW
Room 4116
Washington, DC 20004

Re: Docket ID Number: ED-2020-SCC-0143, Study of Financial Aid Supports for Gear Up Students

Dear Ms. Garcia:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association (NEA), we submit the following response to the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) comment request as it relates to the evaluation of the scholarship component of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP).

As you are aware, GEAR UP is a discretionary grant program designed to increase the number of under-resourced students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. While much of the GEAR UP funding is used for items such as college planning, mentoring, and tutoring services, half of awarded grant funds are also used for scholarships. In some cases, funds for scholarships are not used, and as a result, Local Education Agencies (LEA) and other U.S. Department of Education (USED) partners who manage GEAR UP funds can apply for waivers that allow them to use budgeted scholarship funds for other program needs.

With over three hundred million dollars in GEAR UP funds being awarded to LEAs and other USED partners each year, the proposed evaluation would not only provide program transparency, but would help IES determine exactly which program enhancements are needed to move the program forward and to support those students with highest need. Many of these students are economically under-resourced and come from communities of color and rural areas.

NEA respectfully submits the above comments for consideration and urges the IES and the USED to move forward with this evaluation as it is both timely and relevant. Please do not hesitate to contact Antwan Perry at aperry@nea.org should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Alexis K. Holmes
Policy Manager, Education Policy and Practice