

DATE: January 26, 2012

SUBJECT: GEAR UP/CACG/Latino Student Success Grant Status Reports

ACTION RECOMMENDED: Information

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The GEAR UP initiative is a federal discretionary grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. GEAR UP grantees serve an entire cohort of students beginning no later than the seventh grade and follow the cohort through high school. GEAR UP TN is designed to promote student achievement and enhance awareness of the need to expand access to post-secondary education statewide, especially in areas of the state that are traditionally underserved. GEAR UP TN funds are also used to provide incentive awards to students graduating from the high schools served and scholarships to low-income students in the cohort.

The College Access Challenge Grant is a federal formula grant program focused on providing professional development opportunities for college access professionals and enhancing the services offered to high-need students through the expansion of current college access programs via the Tennessee College Mentor Corps. The overall goal of Tennessee’s CACG is two-fold: (1) make college accessible to more Tennessee graduates through college access and success focused mentoring, and (2) facilitate the transition between high school and community college, and community college and four-year institutions, thereby aiding in college retention and completion.

In October 2010, the Lumina Foundation for Education awarded the Tennessee Higher Education Commission a Latino Student Success Grant aimed at increasing the number and percentage of Latinos completing higher education in Memphis. Through the development of collaborative partnerships with Memphis-area organizations, the project aims to achieve Latino student success through: 1) an intensive mentoring program designed to facilitate the transition between high school and community college, and community college and four-year institutions; 2) support to ensure maximization of student financial aid opportunities; and 3) a bilingual marketing and information campaign designed to expand college access in the Latino community.

The Tennessee College Access and Success Network, established through the Lumina Foundation for Education KnowHow2Go re-grant and expanded through Race to the Top, connects college access and success programs with like-minded organizations with the purpose of increasing the number of Tennesseans participating and succeeding in postsecondary opportunities. The Network creates a college-going culture in communities across the state by expanding and creating new college access and success programs, educating professionals, facilitating statewide advocacy, and cultivating organizational and Network development.