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**GEAR UP New Mexico students prepare for university life
through summer camp**

*Nearly 50 students learned about skills and resources useful for their
transition into postsecondary education*

SANTA FE, NM — In a new initiative from Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness in Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) New Mexico, high school students from across the state ventured to New Mexico Highlands University to learn about skills and resources to make a successful transition to life after high school.

GEAR UP New Mexico, a division of the New Mexico Higher Education Department, is a federally funded program that aims to increase college and career readiness for middle school and high school students. GEAR UP New Mexico partners with seven school districts in the state that serve a high proportion of rural and first-generation students. The U.S. Department of Education renewed funding for the program in 2020 at \$31.4 million for the next seven years to support approximately 7,000 students and their families each year.

Throughout the three-day camp, students worked with [FOCUS](#) to network with other high school students from across New Mexico, learn the basics of scholarships and financial aid – including the Opportunity and Lottery scholarships – reflect on their positive uses of social media, and push the bounds of their creative thinking. FOCUS partners with GEAR UP programs across the country to provide programming that prepares students for college and fosters a college-going culture.

“Students more than met the expectation to step out of their comfort zones to experience campus life and participate in high-engagement workshops,” GEAR UP New Mexico Regional Coordinator **Tamara Trujillo** said. “The camp positively supports their preparation for college, the workforce and their journey to becoming community leaders.”

In addition to learning skills for college, students had the opportunity to stay on-site at New Mexico Highlands University in student resident halls and eat at the campus dining hall, Purple Grill.

“Over the past couple days, I’ve learned how to be more outgoing,” said **Jamileth Monge**, a Capital High School rising senior. “I’m definitely not a very outgoing person and I really like keeping to myself. Working with my team and meeting new people inspired me to talk more and see that it wasn’t that scary.”

“Academically, I learned about number of scholarships available to me and that I can apply for, even the silly ones, like a Minecraft scholarship,” said **Henry Hernandez**, a student at Albuquerque Talent Development Academy. “If there is anything I can say about this experience, it’s that I do not regret a single bit coming along to this camp because I’ve learned so much in the GEAR UP New Mexico program. Taking these opportunities, like these trips, is very beneficial to me.”

Photos from the GUNM College Advantage Camp are available on the GEAR UP New Mexico [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages. More information about GEAR UP New Mexico can be found on our website at gearupnewmexico.org.

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The New Mexico Higher Education Department was established in 2005 and oversees the state’s public and tribal colleges, universities and special schools. It also oversees adult education and literacy programs statewide, manages state-funded financial aid programs and capital projects for higher education institutions, provides college readiness services via the GEAR UP program, and grants state authorization to private colleges operating within New Mexico. For more information, visit hed.nm.gov or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) at @NMHigherEd.