



# UCA selected for \$30 million USDE funding

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*First Arkansas university to receive GEAR UP state grant*

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UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS

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First Arkansas university to receive GEAR UP state grant

The University of Central Arkansas has been selected to receive \$30 million in funding through the U.S. Department of Education's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP).

This is the first statewide GEAR UP award for Arkansas. UCA will facilitate the seven-year, \$30 million grant award.

"UCA is proud to provide leadership in this space as we work with partners statewide to break down barriers to and open up access to postsecondary education," said UCA President Houston Davis.

The grant aims to increase enrollment in postsecondary education through expanded preparedness measures for students and their families. Tapped the GEAR UP Arkansas College Ready Navigator (GUAR-CRN) project at UCA; the seven-year grant is a cohort model targeting sixth- and seventh-grade students in urban and rural Arkansas school districts.

"As a former public school K-12 teacher and administrator, I know that many students are excited learners ready to explore opportunities, but as they begin to question whether they have the ability to attend college, we see their excitement dwindle, and their narrative for what is possible narrows. In many cases, their visions begin to fade as early as middle school," said Dr. Charlotte Parham, principal investigator and associate professor in the UCA College of Education. "For some students, they start to question whether they belong on a college campus, and for others, it is finances. The GUAR-CRN program will address both of those concerns for thousands of students in Arkansas."

The GUAR project will provide activities across three broad categories: student services, educator and school development, and family education.

The grant program is designed to increase the preparedness of students from low-income backgrounds to enter and succeed in college. The current grant funding includes at least 3,400 students from 15 schools from 11 Arkansas school districts starting in sixth or seventh grade. Upon high school completion, these student cohorts will be eligible for college scholarships through grant funding.

Targeted school districts are in Pulaski, Hempstead, Lee, Mississippi, Monroe, Ouachita and Phillips Counties and are listed below:

Blytheville  
Brinkley  
Camden Fairview  
Clarendon  
Little Rock  
Pulaski County  
Helena/West Helena  
Jacksonville  
Lee County  
Marvel/Elaine  
Hope

A kickoff event will be held on UCA's campus on Nov. 27 for leaders of the 11 school districts and GUAR-CRN administrators.

GUAR-CRN partners include Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science; Vela Institute, Cambridge Educational Services; College Prep Associates; UCA College of Education; Arkansas Department of Education Division of Elementary and Secondary Education; and Arkansas Department of Higher Education.

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