Brandi Graybill: From GEAR UP Student to GEAR UP Employee

As a GEAR UP student at Southeast High School (Yoder, Wyoming), Brandi Graybill knew her family couldn't afford to send her to college. Working with GEAR UP, she was able to earn the Hathaway Scholarship as well as several other scholarships. These scholarships enabled her to afford college, and she graduated from Eastern Wyoming College with an associate of arts degree. She became the first person in her family to graduate from college. Now, she works full time as the database technician for the Eastern Wyoming College GEAR UP program.

In the interview below, Brandi discusses her background and transition from a GEAR UP student to a GEAR UP employee.

GUWY: How did you learn about the GEAR UP program?

Brandi: In the spring of 2005, I received information about GEAR UP. I didn’t quite understand what it was about, but one thing I did know was that they were touring Wyoming that summer, and I wanted to go. I had never gone anywhere besides Scottsbluff, Nebraska, Cheyenne, Wyoming, and my home town of Torrington, Wyoming. I filled out the paperwork, and Judy Brown [GEAR UP director at Eastern Wyoming College] called me a few weeks later and told me to pack my bags, because I was one of the students selected to go. That was the start of a lifelong journey.

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Students Visit Daniels Fund Corporate Offices

On June 12, 2014, GEAR UP students from Western Wyoming Community College visited the Daniels Fund corporate offices in Denver, Colorado.

The Daniels Fund staff welcomed the students with stories about philanthropist Bill Daniels’ journey and legacy. After viewing displays in the lobby, students gathered for a presentation about the Daniels Scholarship Program process. The Daniels Scholarship Program provides a four-year, annually-renewable college scholarship for graduating high school seniors in Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico who demonstrate exceptional character, leadership, and a commitment to serving their communities. They also learned about Bill Daniels’ nine core values which guided his every decision and behavior.

Traci Countryman, GEAR UP outreach specialist, gave an overview of characteristics that the Daniels Fund selection committee desires in candidates. Traci also
GUWY: When did you become involved in GEAR UP, and what was it like?

Brandi: I joined GEAR UP the summer before 7th grade. It was exciting, yet terrifying, because I was with a lot of other kids, and I am very shy. I had to step outside of my box, but as it became more fun, I ended up looking forward to everything GEAR UP-related.

GUWY: Did GEAR UP make a difference in helping you prepare for college?

Brandi: Very much so. Without GEAR UP, I don’t know if I would have gone to college. I hated putting any type of money burden on my parents, knowing that I was spending money they didn’t have.

GUWY: What type of support did you receive from GEAR UP, and did it help?

Brandi: I received all of the support you could imagine. They helped me every step of the way, and even after high school, their support remained.

GUWY: What college did you attend, and why did you choose it?

Brandi: I attended Eastern Wyoming College, because I wasn’t ready to move away and live in the dorms. I live right outside of Torrington with my parents.

GUWY: What was it like transitioning from a GU student to a GU employee?

Brandi: It was easy in some ways, because I knew what the language meant. But when it came to the paperwork and the entering of information, it was a little harder, and I had a lot to learn. Working at Eastern Wyoming College has definitely given me an inside look into everything that I received growing up with the GEAR UP program. This program has helped me achieve a huge dream, and I couldn’t be more proud to be on the GEAR UP team now.
Important

FAFSA information

The federal priority deadline for submitting the FAFSA is March 1.
Apply online: www.fafsa.gov

Items needed to complete the FAFSA:
- Student Social Security number
- Parents Social Security numbers (if providing parent information)
- Driver’s license/alien registration card (if any)
- 2014 federal tax returns (including W-2 information) for student, for student’s spouse, if married, and for parents if providing parent information
- Information on savings, investments, and business assets (and for parents if providing parent information)

Review your Student Aid Report (SAR), which are the results from your FAFSA. You will receive your SAR by e-mail.

Your complete SAR will contain your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The SAR will also tell you if you have been selected for FAFSA verification. Read your SAR carefully! If you have been selected for tax verification, you will need to contact your financial aid office to see what documentation is required to receive financial aid.

Reminder: You must submit a FAFSA for each year of college.

Remember deadlines for scholarships and awards! Remember to check your email!

ACT® College Entrance Exam – 2015 Test Dates

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<tr>
<th>Test Date</th>
<th>Registration Deadline</th>
<th>(Late Fee Required)</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 12, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 24, 2015</td>
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The ACT® is an important college entrance exam. Scores can affect college entrance and scholarships.

All Wyoming eleventh-grade students will take the ACT® in April at their schools. Students who want to take the test again can visit the following ACT® website to register for the test and to locate testing centers: www.actstudent.org/regist/dates.html

GEAR UP WYOMING students may contact their GEAR UP coordinator to obtain an ACT test fee waiver. (GEAR UP WYOMING cannot pay for or waive late fees.) Also, GEAR UP WYOMING students have free access to ACT® preparation programs.
GEAR UP Wyoming is administered by the office of Student Educational Opportunity (SEO) in the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Wyoming.

GEAR UP Wyoming Partners:
Casper College, Central Wyoming College, Eastern Wyoming College, Laramie County Community College, Northern Wyoming Community College District, Northwest College, Western Wyoming Community College, University of Wyoming, Wyoming Department of Education

Camp GEAR UP is a weeklong camp at University of Wyoming for entering 9th-12th grade students. The camp gives students a glimpse of college life and helps them explore their career and college interests.

2015 Camp GEAR UP is scheduled for July 13-17 at the University of Wyoming campus. Students should contact their GEAR UP coordinator for more details.

GEAR UP Wyoming: Family Matters is a publication for GEAR UP students and their families offering news and tips to help prepare students for college.

GEAR UP Wyoming is a statewide program that serves 2,000 7th-12th grade, income-eligible students each year. Wyoming’s seven community colleges provide services to these students and encourage them not only to complete high school, but to enter and succeed at a postsecondary institution. GEAR UP Wyoming also supports students through their first year of college.

GEAR UP Wyoming is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education totaling $3,548,876 annually with an additional $3,548,876 annually provided by in-kind and scholarship contributions.