



# Vermont State GEAR UP

GEAR UP is a federally funded program partnering with modest income and first-generation students and their families. We provide resources and support to increase aspirations, postsecondary enrollment, and success.

## WHAT WE DO

GEAR UP encourages and supports all aspects of postsecondary education and career preparation through:

- one-on-one counseling & mentoring
- academic enrichment
- advising & college visits
- career events & fairs
- financial literacy
- scholarships
- family engagement opportunities

## OUR PROGRAM

VSAC's Vermont State GEAR UP program partners with 37 Vermont middle schools and high schools, serving more than 2,500 students and their families. In addition, we serve 300 first-year college and training program enrolled GEAR UP students. Vermont State GEAR UP also partners with the Vermont State University, Vermont Agency of Education, UVM, and other state programs to provide information and supports for a robust postsecondary education and college-ready culture.

With statewide school and agency partnerships, GEAR UP supports:

- Introduction to College and Career Studies classes at Community College of Vermont
- Dual Enrollment and Early College initiatives
- PSAT, Pre-ACT, SAT, and ACT test preparation and vouchers for tests
- Supports for college student persistence through the GEAR UP after high school program
- Advanced Placement courses and test-taking
- Tutoring and academic enrichment
- STEM opportunities (e.g. robotics and chess clubs, science fairs)
- Statewide College and Career Pathways events for high school students and parents
- Transition and Career Conference for Vermont educators and agency staff
- Data and research on college enrollment and persistence

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Program Director Kristin Hubert

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SCAN TO LEARN MORE



## 2023–2024 Outcomes

- 96% of students successfully progressed to the next grade level
- 93% of seniors graduated from high school
- 48% of 2024 high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary education – compared to 40% of Vermont students statewide and only 27% of modest income Vermont students
- 76% of 2023 students who enrolled in postsecondary education persisted to third semester



# Vermont State GEAR UP Success Stories

## JARED PRESEAU

Jared Preseau, promising mechanic, heads to college with his grandfather's gift of knowledge



Last spring, Jared Preseau was knee-deep in auto parts catalogs as he prepared for prom. After spending the winter replacing the motor, transmission, and four-wheel-drive axles in his 1989 Ford F-150, he was racing to finish a few final repairs in time to get his truck road ready for the big night.

For Jared, turning wrenches is part of who he is; his interest in engines and equipment started when he was just eight years old, the day the hay baler broke on his grandfather's farm. Jared didn't think he would go to college—but it's a path his grandfather wanted for him. So, when he had the opportunity to attend a college fair, Jared went. At the fair, he met a counselor with VSAC's GEAR UP and reflected on his plans: "I heard my grandfather's voice, and started to wonder if I was being more stubborn than smart." Now, with the help of VSAC's GEAR UP, Jared is taking his passion to the next level as he heads to Northern Maine Community College to study diesel and hydraulics.

## Rooted and rising: how VSAC helped Olivia Scher discover her strengths

Growing up in rural Vermont, Olivia Scher often felt like she stood out—and not always in ways that felt comfortable. As one of the few people of color in her small town, she sometimes struggled to find people who truly understood her experience. That changed when she joined VSAC's GEAR UP program in high school, where she found guidance and support from a counselor who helped her navigate not just college planning, but also the deeper questions of identity and belonging. Through GEAR UP, Olivia received one-on-one advising, college research support, and help applying for scholarships and financial aid—resources that made a real difference in her journey.

With help from VSAC, Olivia was able to reduce her college costs significantly and even paid off her student loans by sophomore year in college. She's currently working with children with autism, a job she loves, and is planning to pursue a Master's in Clinical Mental Health. Olivia credits VSAC for helping her find her path and encourages other students to explore life beyond their hometowns. "You have to find out who you are away from what you know," she says. "College is the time to try new things and figure out what you like. Once you do, always stand your ground."

## OLIVIA SCHER

