GEAR UP UNIVERSITY GAME: INTRODUCTION

Welcome to GEAR UP University! This mock college enrollment game created by the team at GU2 in San Antonio ISD is a great activity for GEAR UP Week or any other time your students could benefit from some engaging, hands-on learning. Inspired by Texas GEAR UP's Get a Life game, this activity is perfect for seniors (or even juniors) who will soon be experiencing that life-changing transition to college—which we all know can be more than a little daunting.

The GEAR UP University game has several goals:

- Allow students to experience the college matriculation process in a fun, interactive, and non-intimidating manner
- Teach students the functions of university departments and how to navigate a college campus
- Guide students through decisions regarding financial aid, housing, meal plans, and optional fees
- Gather info about areas students might struggle with during college enrollment
- Encourage scholarship-application submissions
- Enhance students' problem-solving and team-building skills
- Match!

In the game materials, tuition and other costs are based on actual local and state university fees. The financial aid award letters that will be handed out to each player also include real grant and scholarship options. So the game mimics the true college experience closely—which is ideal for students who could certainly benefit from a bit of an enrollment dress rehearsal!

Duration: 45-90 minutes (depending on the number of participants)
Location: Gym, cafeteria or other space that will comfortably fit eight tables (ideally with ample wall space)
Staff needed: GEAR UP team members and partners/volunteers/school staff to man the stations (be sure to document the match)
Needed for players: Pencil/pen, expense ledger (see game materials), award letter (see game materials), college schedule (see game materials), cellphone to use as calculator

Prep: All game materials downloaded from texasgearup.com will need to be printed (in house or by your local print shop) ahead of time for use in the game. The playing space will also need to be set up with tables for each station ahead of time.

Additional Tips:
- Be sure to take time to recap and reflect with the students and to address any questions they have before leaving.
- Have scholarship applications ready to hand out to students along with a list of scholarship search websites.
- You could also share this game with parents to help them better understand the college enrollment process.

Game Instructions

At the beginning of the GEAR UP University game, all of the students are given a pen or pencil, a blank expense ledger, a college schedule, and a financial aid award letter. There are six different award letters and three different schedules, and they should all be distributed randomly.

Players will note their "Total Award" amount from their letter, and enter that in the first line of their expense ledger. From there, they'll visit all the different stations/tables to find out what expenses are associated with each step of the college enrollment process. As students progress through the stations, they'll notate their expenses on their ledgers and keep a running balance to see how they're doing with their budgets.

The stations are:

Financial Aid	Athletics	Meal Plans (Board)
Bookstore	Health Services	Technology Services
Student ID	Housing (Room)	Parking

Each station should be able to provide dollar values associated with different items on the expense ledger. And students are likely to have a number of questions for the adult(s) manning each table, so every station should have someone who knows the topic well and can confidently answer questions and provide guidance to players.

For example: The individual assigned to the Health Services station will make up costs as students visit that table (like how much a broken leg or a shot might cost). He or she will also share information with players about the variety of medical/wellness services available on a college campus (like mental health resources)—and how important it is to actually go to Health Services if you get sick because it's something you're already paying for as part of your tuition. So that station's expert(s) should do some research ahead of time or just bring an existing wealth of knowledge about the subject to the table.

If players run out of money before completing their ledger, they should visit the Financial Aid station to investigate loans. The expert at that station will explain the different types of loans and remind students to apply for work-study on their FAFSA and apply for additional scholarships.

The game also features **Life Happens cards that should be passed out at random to students during gameplay**. These cards feature unexpected things that pop up during the college experience (both positive and negative) that may impact players' available funds. It's a great way to teach the lesson that students should always be prepared for any surprises.

  * As a bonus learning opportunity, some of the Life Happens cards reference different buildings on college campuses. Consider printing out sample campus maps from the websites of colleges throughout Texas and nationwide to have on hand for players to review along with their Life Happens cards. Getting students to realize they need to find their way around their future college campuses before the first day of class is certainly a huge takeaway.

As players progress through the various tables, station staffers should initial the students' registration verification sheets (attached to the expense ledgers) to confirm that they indeed stopped there. Once players have completed their ledgers, they should assemble to compare notes with other students and wait for everyone to finish.

After all players are done, the activity can wind down with reflection questions and overall time for feedback and comments from the players. Hopefully they'll find that it was a truly eye-opening experience!

If you have any questions about the game, feel free to reach out to info@texasgearup.com. In the meantime, happy playing!