

*Pat A. Strong*  
*Chair*

*Scott O. Brame*  
*Vice Chair*

*Artis L. Terrell, Jr.*  
*Secretary*

*E. Joseph Savoie*  
*Commissioner of*  
*Higher Education*



**BOARD OF REGENTS**

*P. O. Box 3677*

*Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3677*

*Phone (225) 342-4253, FAX (225) 342-9318*

*www.regents.state.la.us*

*Robert J. Bruno*  
*Richard E. D'Aquin*  
*Donna G. Klein*  
*Ingrid T. Labat*  
*Robert W. Levy*  
*W. Clinton Rasberry, Jr.*  
*Mary Ellen Roy*  
*William Clifford Smith*  
*Victor T. Stelly*  
*Harold M. Stokes*  
*Roland M. Toups*  
*James Klock., Student*

Date: August 2, 2007

Contact: Kevin Hardy  
(225)342-4253

## **Louisiana Student Selected for National GEAR UP Scholarship**

Before Fred Reed connected with LA GEAR UP the summer before his sixth grade year, he had only small dreams of going to college and, statistically speaking, even less of a chance. But Reed, now 16, chose to take advantage of the opportunities afforded him through the federally-funded LA GEAR UP initiative, aimed at giving hardworking students both a vision for attending college and a better chance to succeed on the ACT college readiness assessment, something essential to an increased opportunity for college access and success.

Now Reed no longer just *dreams* of going to college; he is taking a major step toward college admission. With hands-on guidance and rigorous preparation, Reed was able to raise his ACT score from a 16 to a 23, a leap that also earned him one of six national scholarship awards offered through the U.S. Department of Education-sponsored program. So far, Reed is one of GEAR UP's biggest success stories.

After attending his first LA GEAR UP summer camp at Louisiana Tech University the summer before his sixth grade year, Reed identified with the program and became increasingly involved. The personable Reed, now 16 and a rising junior at Lake Providence High School in Lake Providence, is set to receive a federal GEAR UP College Entrance Exam Scholarship worth \$2,500. Reed is one of six GEAR UP students in the nation selected for this scholarship after having demonstrated immense improvement in college entrance exams test scores and academic achievement.

“GEAR UP has been a big help to me and many other students,” Reed said. “They offered summer camps at Louisiana Tech and other colleges and sent representatives to discuss the ACT, financial aid and scholarships. Camp is free—you just don’t find that.”

After taking the American College Test (ACT) his freshman year and scoring a 16, Reed re-took the test last April and improved to a score of 23. He attributed his improvement to a number of factors, particularly his attentiveness in the classroom, sense of perseverance and willingness to practice independently.

“My goal actually was to get a 23,” Reed said. “I needed a 23 to go to Southern University and receive the TOPS Performance Award. For the scholarship, I had to focus on the reading section in order to score a 20, and I got a 21—I wanted to make sure I would be financially stable.”

Though so few teens receive this honor, Reed's award is not surprising in light of his other accomplishments. Since he began participating in GEAR UP, Reed has won three Rewards for Success scholarship awards, and has won the top award given, \$1000, each time. In addition, Reed was instrumental in starting a chapter of the Young Explorers' Club, a continuation of GEAR UP for teens entering high school, where he has been elected as the president the last three years running.

Despite his success, Reed is still a humble, soft-spoken young man who will not hesitate to give credit where credit is due. He admitted that he did not develop his strong work ethic and sense of personal responsibility all on his own.

"My mother, Vivian Allen, has been a role model for me," Reed said. "She is a single mother, but has always held me accountable. I have two younger siblings, and I know they need another positive example."

Though he lives in East Carroll Parish, one of the poorest areas in the nation, Reed has had and will have some unique opportunities to travel and meet other teens through GEAR UP. To receive his scholarship award this year, he attended the 2007 Annual Conference in San Francisco last week. In addition, he was one of only two Louisiana students to attend last year's Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

"The Annual Conference was the first time I met people with my same personality," Reed said. "There were so many kids like me from all over the country who had the same goals and aspirations as I did."

That statement alone could be considered proof that GEAR UP is education funding well-spent. Signed into law as part of the Higher Education Amendments of 1998, GEAR UP began in Louisiana after the state received a 2002 GEAR UP award of \$2.5 million.

"GEAR UP has been invaluable in assisting low-income communities in formulating new or expanded plans to help strengthen their schools and, as a result, enhance the college readiness of their students," said Dr. Kerry Davidson, Deputy Commissioner for Sponsored Programs at the Louisiana Board of Regents. "By helping underprivileged students learn how to prepare for college and college entrance exams, GEAR UP offers unprecedented educational opportunities for Louisiana students. We would be quite happy to clone many more Fred Reeds!"

Specifically designed to enable more young Americans to succeed in middle and secondary school, GEAR UP encourages them to study hard and to take the right courses to become college eligible and competitive for admission to colleges and universities.

Despite having so many achievements at such a young age, Reed will not get complacent. He said his next goal is to go to Southern University, study medicine and become a registered nurse anesthetist. Reed wants to make sure he can have a job that will enable him to be financially secure—though not for the reasons most teenagers would cite.

"I want to be able to give back to my community," Reed said. "I at least need to be able to donate to the scholarship award given to the valedictorian or salutatorian of my high school."

Reed said he is very aware the challenges that are still facing him, but hard work is not something he worries over.

“In my area, I see people who sit back and are content to wait on a welfare check,” Reed said. “I understand that everyone is different, but I want to make my own living. I don’t want to depend on anyone else—I want to do it myself.”

- 30 -