

**University of Maine at Farmington Media Release
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UMF Awarded \$20 Million 'GEAR UP' College Readiness Grant

FARMINGTON, ME (September 25, 2014)—The University of Maine at Farmington has been selected to receive a \$20 million, seven-year Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) state grant by the U.S. Department of Education to help students who are at risk in Maine prepare for and be successful in postsecondary education.

"This GEAR UP grant is a wonderful asset for Maine and Maine students," said Kathryn A. Foster, UMF president. "Its implementation will help inspire all Maine students to strive beyond high school and realize their potential. UMF looks forward to working closely with our partners and supporters so we can help improve student achievement and continue to advance Maine's future."

The Maine grant is projected to serve up to 7,600 students annually from 63 high-poverty, rural schools in 26 districts. In addition, 19 external partners representing a wide spectrum of educational and business organizations will be working in support of the grant's goals.

Maine is one of 10 states to receive the 2014 state grant, with grantees recently announced by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Thirty-one partnership grants were also awarded. As the sole institution of higher education in Maine receiving the state grant, UMF will serve as the award's fiscal agent, with Syntiro, a non-profit based in Readfield, providing the administration.

"Syntiro is pleased to be collaborating with the University of Maine at Farmington, and we look forward to enhancing and supporting a robust college-going culture in the Maine schools," said Kathryn F. Markovchick, Syntiro president and grant project director. "We provided the administration for a previous GEAR UP state grant awarded to Maine's Department of Education from 2005-2011. We hope to build upon the successes of that experience and work to ensure that together, with UMF, school and non-school partners, we create outstanding opportunities for Maine's students."

Participants in the grant will work closely with students from low-income families beginning in seventh-grade to help improve their academic performance and increase the rate of high school graduation. In addition it will work to increase students' and their families' knowledge of post-secondary education, financial literacy and the options available to them.

"A new feature of the grant this year is the opportunity to follow and support GEAR UP students and their families during the first year of college," said Katherine Yardley, UMF associate provost, dean of the College of Education, Health and Rehabilitation and grant program manager. "This is a valuable new connection that will give us additional insight into students' needs in their first year and the types of support we can provide to ensure their academic success."

For the first year of the new grant, UMF will receive about \$2.9 million. The total \$20 million in federal dollars will be matched by non-federal dollars from 46 partners across the state.

UMF has worked with the GEAR UP program since 1999, previously receiving a partnership award for 2005-2011.

More on University of Maine at Farmington

A nationally-recognized public liberal arts college, UMF enjoys a 150-year tradition of providing a quality academic experience combined with the personal attention and close student / faculty collaboration that help prepare all students to be successful. Rooted in a tradition of teacher preparation, UMF offers top quality programs in the arts and sciences, teacher preparation, and business and pre-professional studies. UMF is located in the heart of Maine's four-season outdoor recreational region and is a welcoming, close-knit academic community that prepares students for engaged citizenship, enriching professional careers and an enduring love of learning.

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