This special issue of Myriad highlights UWM’s precollege programs and its participants. For an overview of all that we offer, refer to the list on pages 10 and 11.

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**On the cover** - Students from the Health Sciences Academy program donned surgical garb during a visit to the “Easy Street” program at Sinai Samaritan Hospital. The Academy is sponsored by the UWM School of Allied Health Professions Office of Diversity, and is partially funded by the Ameritech Corporation.
Growing Our Own

By Beth Stafford

"Growing our own" is one way Gary Williams, executive director of Student Academic Development and director for Multicultural Affairs, describes precollege programs at UWM. "The purpose of precollege is to prepare elementary, middle, and high school students for a postsecondary experience," he says.

For students enrolled in precollegiate activities at UWM, "exposure to a major university is critical. This is the first time many of these students have been on a college campus. They attend classes in campus buildings; have access to the library and computer labs; and meet faculty, staff, and college students."

Seeing people on campus who look like those in their own neighborhoods and families has a real impact, says Williams. "Because of that, these kids begin to see higher education as a real option for themselves."

Advisors visit Milwaukee area schools to recruit for the program, making it clear that help with basic skills as well as enrichment activities is available. Students entering UWM's precollege programs have an average GPA of 2.5, which is slightly above a ‘C’, and yet upon completion of the precollege experience at UWM, over 90% graduate from high school and go on to college. "We give students the jump start that will help them succeed with their math, English, writing, science, and other courses during the next school year," Williams says. "Additionally, we team the student who wants to build bridges with the architecture program, and the future astronaut with an astronomy course."

Williams believes the best way to "hook" students is to listen to their dreams and goals. "Then you can use that area of interest to stimulate their appetites for educational experiences."

While Williams likes to look on the
university’s precollege programs as a pathway drawing students to UWM, he emphasizes that the main goal is for students to pursue postsecondary study, period.

“While we would like the students to select UWM as their first choice, we’re aware that some of them will go on to other places.”

According to the most recent data, 533 former precollege students registered for classes at UWM this past fall.

Williams is quick to add that many students originally from the Milwaukee area return home and to UWM after a year or two away from home. “About half of every UWM graduating class is composed of transfer students.”

Precollege staff and administrators at UWM have forged connections with other Milwaukee postsecondary institutions in an effort to be aware of the different options available to young students.

Williams would like to see much more precollegiate activity on postsecondary campuses everywhere. Currently UWM serves precollege students in various academic and career-related programs and activities. With the help and support of the community, UWM will increase that number to 10,000 to 12,000 in four years.

Williams also believes that parents are an important aspect of the precollege experience. “We rely on parents to reinforce what we are teaching these students,” he says. “It’s important that we do more to educate parents about what their children are learning in our programs, and how they, as parents, can assist us in ensuring their children’s success.”

Finally, two years ago UWM launched the Milwaukee Commitment, our strategic plan for achieving racial/ethnic diversity among faculty, staff, and students. UWM realizes that ‘doing precollege’ is our commitment to an investment in Milwaukee’s future.

In the Milwaukee Commitment, UWM has made a pledge to expand and enhance precollegiate programming offered by UWM to create greater capacity, access, and diversity of opportunities for participation by Milwaukee youth. The Milwaukee Commitment also has pledged to provide scholarships to high-achieving graduates following successful completion of precollege programs.

For more information on a comprehensive array of precollege programs at UWM, please call 414-229-5834 or check our Web site for the Precollege Program Directory at http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/ PRECOLL. A copy of the Milwaukee Commitment can also be found on the Web at http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/milw-comm.
UWM works closely with Milwaukee Public Schools and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in its precollege efforts. Lynn Krebs with Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), and Paul Spraggins of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), shared their thoughts about precollege programs in an interview with Pauli Taylorboyd.

“Wisconsin’s precollege programs are the envy of the rest of the nation,” according to Lynn Krebs, coordinator for guidance and career education with Milwaukee Public Schools. “When I attend national meetings, people from other states marvel at the level of collaboration between school districts, universities and the Department of Public Instruction, as well as the number and caliber of precollege programs in Wisconsin,” she added.

Both Krebs and Paul Spraggins, director of the Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs, Department of Public Instruction, credit UWM precollege staff with being nurturing, welcoming, and extremely supportive, drawing in not only elementary, middle, and high school students but also their parents.

“I’ve actually seen precollege parents drive 700 miles round-trip just to see their son or daughter in a precollege recognition activity,” said Spraggins. “Precollege activities require the active participation of parents, who are a key component.

“Precollege provides access for kids to go to college. Milwaukee is our biggest draw, and UWM is our largest urban educational institution.”

PAUL SPRAGGINS
Director of the Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Krebs added that “MPS is looking at increases in college-going and scholarship rates that can be attributed to a great extent to precollege experiences. In 1990, for example, 11 percent of our graduates received scholarships and/or grants. In 1999, 18 percent of MPS graduates of color (compared to 19 percent overall that year) received competitive scholarships. An increase in precollege experiences is credited with playing a critical role in this increase. GEAR UP-funded initiatives have allowed UWM, DPI, and MPS to provide additional precollege experiences for students in eight middle schools in MPS.

In addition, “the State of Wisconsin received a statewide GEAR UP grant and three partnership grants in 1999. All students who participate in those programs are eligible for both GEAR UP and precollege dollars,” Spragins said. He further emphasized that this linkage between GEAR UP and the provision of other precollege programs enhances academic support to students.

“I would like to see the day when every MPS middle school and high school student had at least one precollege experience,” Krebs said. “I believe this should even be extended into the elementary school. Not every child will go on to college, but every child deserves the opportunity to choose college.”

“Wisconsin’s precollege programs are the envy of the rest of the nation.”

LYN N. KREBS
Coordinator, Office of Guidance & Career Education, Milwaukee Public Schools

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FACTS YOU MIGHT WANT TO KNOW
■ In the last three years, the number of graduates who have taken the ACT has exceeded 50 percent, which was historically unprecedented in the MPS System. Our students have developed greater readiness to get into college, get scholarship support, and ultimately succeed in college. Our counselors have persistently pursued helping students get prepared for college, get into college, and get scholarship dollars for college.

■ There has been a steady increase in scholarships for all students, and particularly for students of color, during the past few years. We have increased the percentage of minority scholarships an average of 1 percentage point a year while working with an increasing number of first-generation graduates who need more support to access college.

■ Through a concerted focus on preparing all students for readiness for 2- and 4-year college success, increases are noted in many schools in the number of students taking enrichment types of precollege courses, transcripted college courses, and AP and IB coursework and exams.

■ The Class of 2000 won $9,800,000 in competitive and criterion-based scholarships. (This does not include grants based exclusively on financial need.)

■ Over half of MPS graduates are accepted into and continue their education in 2- or 4-year postsecondary institutions immediately following graduation.

Statistics provided by Lynn Krebs, Milwaukee Public Schools.
Pre-College Academy in the new millennium

By Linda Plagman

More than 25 years ago, the Pre-College Center at UWM served less than 100 students in one six-week program. In fiscal 2000-2001, the combined programs of the Pre-College Academy served over 5,000 students. Such dramatic growth has occurred because of the excellent reputation of its programs, and increased recognition by the state, the university, and the Milwaukee community that these programs are effective. UW System’s Plan 2008, The Milwaukee Idea, and the Milwaukee Commitment all reflect commitments to increase the scope and breadth of precollege programs on campus.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (March 11, 2000) reported the Milwaukee Public Schools high school graduation rate at only 56%. However, a UWM Pre-College Report (January 2000), based on almost 2,000 student records, indicated that 92% of students who participated in UWM’s precollege programs are attending or have attended a

NEW INITIATIVES REACH OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

by Kathy Quirk

I feel my purpose is to help others realize their dreams. I feel my work with the Pre-College Academy allows me to do this.”

Carl Meredith, director of UWM’s Pre-College Academy, makes that statement firmly but with enthusiasm about the Academy, which includes a number of summer and academic-year programs designed to get elementary, middle and high school students excited about going to college.

Meredith is excited, he says, about the solid core of programs and staffs the Pre-College Academy has, as well as enthusiastic about several new initiatives. These initiatives focus on bringing more programs to students in their own neighborhoods through collaboration with organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs, the YWCA, Loyola Academy, the United Community Center, and various faith-based organizations.

“We feel we can reach more students and their families by reaching out into the community, although students will continue to come to campus to get exposed to the UW M experience,” says Meredith. Neighborhood programs started on the near South Side are expanding to the North and Northwest sides of Milwaukee.

Another new initiative is collaborative work with other community organizations. Meredith, who’s an officer in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, is looking at collaborating with organizations like the Guard in offering workshops on leadership development.

Currently, the Academy is working with the STRIVE Media Institute on a marketing program designed to increase community awareness of the Pre-College Academy’s programs. That effort involves students in designing a new look, a logo, a full-scale television promotion and Teen Forum broadcasts.

The Pre-College Academy also is using teen role models in another initiative—a teen mentoring program in collaboration with the Private Industry Council’s Step-Up Program. The teens receive six weeks of training, then serve as mentors for younger students.

“The training helps the mentors refine their critical thinking abilities, learn to speak in public, and research and prepare information,” says Meredith. The younger students respond very positively to these mentors, who are close to their own age. “They need to know they can have a future if they’re smart and get good grades, and that it’s cool to be smart,” he adds.

“We really see our programs at the Pre-College Academy as a supplement to a young person’s academic endeavors in their schools,” says Meredith. “We have a variety of programs because no one single approach works with every student.”
post-secondary institution.

Under the leadership of Director Carl Meredith, the Pre-College Academy (PCA) has established a focused Strategic Plan for the 21st Century to respond to the university’s challenges. The plan is based on the following principles:

- To be student and family focused
- To strengthen the pre-college “pipeline” from third through twelfth grade
- To emphasize community collaborations
- To emphasize relationships among students, families, staff and community
- To improve academic and personal support
- To create innovative, dynamic and responsive programs for students
- To emphasize service to the students
- To include parents/ families in programming and service
- To use critical data for assessing quality and planning for growth
- To believe in motivation, preparation, graduation, and matriculation

Those principles, and lots of discussion, resulted in PCA’s revised mission statement:

To provide high quality academic, personal and social support to elementary through high school students and families, ensuring the students’ graduation from high school and preparation for post-secondary education.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

- Take a more holistic approach to serving students through workshops and programs that, in addition to academic core course support, stress career development, goal setting, decision making, risk-taking, values, communication, adolescent development, peer pressure, social skills, relationships and more.
- Host a Youth Issues Summit in fall, 2001, for all program participants.
- Train students from the Step-Up program (through a Private Industry Council grant) to be youth mentors and ambassadors for our programs.
- Work with other units of the University to help precollege graduates transition to college.
- Increase services to parents and families through special workshops and events, and develop more community initiatives to serve students where they live and go to school.
PRECOLLEGE Programs

HEALTH SCIENCES ACADEMY

UPWARD BOUND MATH AND SCIENCE

HEALTH CAREERS BRIDGE PROGRAM
Evan Foster dissected frogs during the Mini-Courses' Odyssey biology class.
ACT PREPARATION
11th & 12th graders
(minimum 1.5 GPA in core academic subjects)
Improve scores on the ACT college entrance exam; take classes in math, reading, writing, science reasoning, and test-taking strategies. Includes an opportunity to take a nonofficial ACT test.
Fall and Spring: 7 weeks, Saturday a.m. sessions
MINI-COURSE PROGRAM
PHONE: (414) 229-6236
FAX: (414) 229-3490

ARTISTIC VISION
6th - 12th graders
Enhance reading and writing skills, and make written/ spoken words come alive. Students are provided workshops and opportunities for performance.
Academic year and two summer camps in June
WOODLAND PATTERN BOOK CENTER/ PECK SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
PHONE: (414) 263-5001

COLLEGE FOR KIDS
K5 - 7th graders
Take enrichment classes taught by UWM faculty and others in a variety of subjects. Summer: 1- and 2-week sessions
Academic year: Saturday classes
COLLEGE FOR KIDS
PHONE: (414) 227-3360
FAX: (414) 227-3168

GEAR UP
6th - 12th graders from selected schools
Intensive academic and enrichment activities as well as parent and family education programs that include tutoring, mentoring, and field trips.
Year-round
GEAR UP
PHONE: (414) 229-2845
FAX: (414) 227-2918

HEALTH CAREERS BRIDGE PROGRAM
10th - 12th graders
(minimum 2.5 GPA in math and science)
Learn about health care careers through an intensive college laboratory, clinical, and community experience.
8-week summer internship and career-oriented school year activities
SCHOOL OF NURSING
PHONE: (414) 229-6076
FAX: (414) 229-6474

HEALTH SCIENCES ACADEMY
4th - 5th graders from underrepresented groups
(minimum 2.0 GPA)
Explore health care careers through hands-on activities in UWM labs, classroom instruction, and field trips to health care facilities.
Two one-week sessions in June and July
SCHOOL OF ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS
PHONE: (414) 229-5761
FAX: (414) 906-3907

HEALTH SCIENCES SEMINARS
11th & 12th graders from the New School for Community Services
(minimum 2.0 GPA)
Discover health care opportunities, meet with health care professionals, and improve college preparation through classroom instruction.
Spring
SCHOOL OF ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS
PHONE: (414) 229-5761
FAX: (414) 906-3907

I'M GOING TO COLLEGE
4th graders from target elementary schools
Introduce students to the advantages of a college education by having them experience a day in the life of a college freshman on the UWM campus.
Teachers build the experience into classroom instruction.
Academic year
COLLEGE FOR KIDS
PHONE: (414) 227-3360
FAX: (414) 227-3168

IT2000/ MITEC
(INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY 2000/MILLENNIUM INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION AND CAREERS)
9th - 12th graders
Provide a series of basic and advanced computer skills that include word processing, spreadsheet, Web page/ publication design, programming, network administration, etc. The computer training projects also offer life skills, career development, and internships.
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION STUDIES
PHONE: (414) 229-3627
FAX: (414) 229-4848

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER
9th - 12th graders from Loyola Academy
Provide career and life skills development through classroom instruction.
6-week summer program; academic year follow-up
PRE-COLLEGE ACADEMY
PHONE: (414) 229-5834
FAX: (414) 229-2592

MEDAL
(MEDICINE, ENGINEERING, DENTISTRY, ARCHITECTURE, LAW)
9th - 12th graders from underrepresented groups
(minimum 2.0 GPA)
Experience career options through workshops and hands-on activities, and interact with professionals and college students at five post-secondary institutions.
5 consecutive Saturday sessions in February and March
SCHOOL OF ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS
PHONE: (414) 229-5761
FAX: (414) 906-3907

MINI-COURSES
6th - 12th graders
Placement in classes depends on GPA
Increase academic skills and explore interests through a wide choice of classes at both the skill building and enrichment levels.
Fall and Spring: 3 consecutive Saturdays
Summer: 1- and 2-week sessions
MINI-COURSE PROGRAM
PHONE: (414) 229-6236
FAX: (414) 229-3490
At a glance

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE
5th - 8th graders
Provide a series of workshops at school and community sites, or on the UWM campus, to promote the importance of pursuing higher education. Campus tours can be arranged to complement the workshops. Year-round

PHONE: (414) 229-2843
FAX: (414) 229-2592

QUEST PROJECT
Students who have participated in specific UW System precollege programs
Provide extensive support system for students and parents including tutoring, workshops, and other academic offerings. Year-round

PHONE: (414) 229-4061
FAX: (414) 229-3471

STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAM
8th or 9th - 12th graders
Enhance students’ chances of successfully completing high school and college by taking a wide variety of academic and career exploration classes during the summer. Academic advising, tutoring, and workshops are offered during the academic year. 6-week summer component with academic year activities

PRE-COLLEGE ACADEMY
PHONE: (414) 229-3172
FAX: (414) 229-2592

SUMMER INSTITUTE ON NONVIOLENCE
7th - 9th graders
Share concerns about violence and learn conflict resolution techniques. One-week summer session (meets all day)

PHONE: (414) 229-6549

TALENT SEARCH
6th - 12th graders who meet specific federal criteria, live in target area, or attend a target school
Provide assistance in completing high school and enrolling in postsecondary institutions through academic advising, educational and financial workshops, tutoring and field trips. Year-round

PHONE: (414) 229-3813
FAX: (414) 229-5699

UPWARD BOUND
9th - 12th graders who meet specific federal criteria and attend a target high school
Promote high school and college graduation; offer classroom instruction, tutoring sessions and enrichment workshops; and provide a variety of social/cultural activities and trips. Year-round with 6-week summer component

PHONE: (414) 229-6513
FAX: (414) 229-2859

UPWARD BOUND MATH AND SCIENCE
9th - 12th graders who meet specific federal criteria and attend a target high school
Offer advanced instruction, workshops, and a variety of activities for students with special interests and/or talents in the areas of mathematics, science, or technology. Year-round with 6-week summer component

PHONE: (414) 229-4434
FAX: (414) 229-2859

URBAN DAY MATH INITIATIVE
4th & 5th graders from Urban Day School
Use Socratic methodology to teach higher level of Algebra concepts to children through the nationally acclaimed Project SEED program. Two 5-week sessions in June and July

DEPARTMENT OF MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS
PHONE: (414) 229-3021
FAX: (414) 229-2479

URBAN TEACHER WORLD
Entering 10th graders from Riverside University, South Division, and other greater Milwaukee high schools
Learn how to expand reading, writing, test-taking, and study skills through the use of technology and film. Students will research information for their production of video and Web site. 2-week session in June

PHONE: (414) 229-2472
FAX: (414) 229-4721

VETERANS UPWARD BOUND
Eligible veterans in Milwaukee, Racine, and Waukesha Counties
Provide individualized instruction based on interests, needs, and goals in computers, reading, writing and math. GED preparation, career and personal counseling, postsecondary enrollment assistance, and cultural enrichment activities are also offered. Year-round

PHONE: (414) 229-2607
FAX: (414) 229-5758

YOUTH ENTERPRISE ACADEMY
9th & 10th graders from the Milwaukee Public Schools
Expand skills and knowledge in money management and the fundamentals of market economics. Students track stocks, learn basics of supply and demand, solve economic mysteries, play market simulation, and go on field trips. Two 1-week sessions in June

CENTER FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION
PHONE: (414) 229-2607
FAX: (414) 229-5758

YOUNG SCHOLARS PROGRAM
4th & 5th graders from Bruce Guadalupe Community School
Provide classroom instruction, career exploration, and life skills development. 6-week summer program and short courses during the academic year

PRE-COLLEGE ACADEMY
PHONE: (414) 229-3172
FAX: (414) 229-2592
Youth Enterprise Academy students watched the opening of the Chicago Board of Trade and a special program and tour of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago during a field trip to Chicago. Tim O’Driscoll, an economics teacher at Arrowhead High School in Hartland, accompanied the students.
Recognizing that the pathway to college begins early in a child’s educational career, colleges increasingly are working with pre-kindergarten, elementary, and middle school students, parents, and administrators. Collaboration between the university, school systems, and corporations brings together representatives of all segments of the educational “pipeline” to identify issues of mutual concern, develop strategic goals, and forge new joint programs.

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Ameritech Corporation have established a partnership that affects the success of precollege students by preparing...
them for their next level of educational experiences.

In fall 1999, UWM received a four-year grant from the Ameritech Corporation to support precollege initiatives set forth in the Milwaukee Commitment, UWM’s strategic plan for racial and ethnic diversity. As a result, the following programs were established.

- **The Young Scholars Program**, a collaborative effort between UWM’s Pre-College Academy and Bruce Guadalupe Community School that provides year-round intensive instruction in language arts, math, and science to students in fourth and fifth grades. The summer 2000 session consisted of instructional coursework, and field trips to UWM, Mitchell Park Domes, Milwaukee County Zoo, and the Milwaukee Public Museum. In fall 2000, the students participated in weekend mini-courses, workshops, and field trips. Other schools with American Indian, African American, and Southeast Asian students are expected to be added in the future.

- **The Urban Day Math Initiative**, a collaboration between the UWM Department of Multicultural Affairs and Urban Day School, provides intensive Project SEED summer math classes to fourth and fifth graders. Project SEED is a nationally acclaimed program that uses Socratic methodology to teach higher level algebra concepts to children.

- **The Health Sciences Academy** provides one-week enrichment experiences during the summer for fifth graders. The program is designed to expose students to health care professions by exploring science and mathematics. Students participate in research projects, work in clinical laboratory settings, and observe the day-to-day operations of health care professionals.

- **The I'm Going to College program** is designed to introduce fourth graders to the advantages of a college education by experiencing a day in the life of a UWM college freshman. The program works with classroom teachers to help students prepare for this college experience, and culminates with a visit to the UWM campus that includes tours, attending classes, purchasing books and materials from the Bookstore, eating at the Union, and other hands-on activities.

The mission of the precollege program is to create a cadre of students with sound analytical and critical thinking skills, superb reading and writing skills, and the confidence to achieve success. This cannot be accomplished without the support of Ameritech and other corporate partners.
By Beverley Pickering-Reyna

It’s before 8 a.m. on a Saturday, and school is in session for more than 200 young adults converging on the UWM campus. Ages 15 to 19, they are attending the Information Technology 2000 Computer Training Project (IT 2000). Most of them see IT 2000 as a launch pad for success. In their estimation, taking courses at a university carries prestige and prepares them for college life.

Presently, the project provides word processing, spreadsheet, slide presentation, and Web page development instruction for six weeks. It adds life skills and career development training for an additional six weeks. Life skills help the teens learn how to develop a support matrix while continuing an education, prepare for the workplace, and manage interpersonal relationships on the job. But these students want more.

In response to the need for IT 2000 expansion, the Helen Bader Foundation is awarding its largest grant for 2001 ($340,000 over three years) to assist an emerging companion strategy. IT 2000 combines with the Millennium Information Technology Education & Careers (MITEC) to supply complex technology and career development challenges for youth. MITEC, one of three proposals receiving a Milwaukee Idea Round 2 grant, expands the learning process to programming languages, animation creation, publication design, multimedia authoring, network administration, access to certification programs, and more. IT 2000 has nearly 350 graduates, and expects to significantly increase that number through its MITEC companion.

The companion strategy comprises several levels, helping students build sound skills, experience diverse technology education, and increase their confidence through internships and other placement methods. Students remain in IT 2000/ MITEC until they are ready for the workplace or higher education. As co-creators of IT 2000, Gerard Randall, Jr., CEO of the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County (PIC) and member of the UW System Board of Regents, and Mohammed Aman, dean of the School of Information Studies and interim dean of the School of Education at UWM, participated in developing the companion strategy.

The companion strategy paid competitive wages while students learned. Students without transportation received bus tickets until the first payday. This strategy, in conjunction with program presentations in more than 16 schools, increased the enrollment rate from 89 students in the Summer 2000 program to 263 in the Spring 2001 session. Increased funding for the companion strategy provided a training wage increase from minimum wage to $6.25 per hour. In addition, students who lived between Locust Street, Juneau Avenue, Holton Street, and 35th Street became eligible for college scholarships through the PIC Reach Program.

In March, students in the program received certificates of completion, celebrating accomplishments they’ll remember the rest of their lives.
GEAR UP:

Building pathways for student success

By Pamela Clark

There is a bold, new precollege program on the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee campus. GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness & Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a five-year, $5.5 million initiative designed to bring about systemic change and educational reform in several Milwaukee schools: Edison, Kosciuszko, and Milwaukee Village Middle Schools, as well as their three feeder high schools – Custer, North Division and South Division High Schools.

GEAR UP works to transform its schools through collaborative partnerships with:
- The Milwaukee Public Schools
- The Girl Scouts of Greater Milwaukee
- New Concept Self Development Center
- Northcott Neighborhood House
- The Greater Milwaukee Young Women’s Christian Association
- Milwaukee Area Technical College
- UW System Multicultural Information Center
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

The program is unique in its approach. Shortly after it was funded in 1999, the staff began enrolling all sixth and seventh grade students attending the three target middle schools. Since then, a new sixth grade class has been added to the cohort each year. When the federal funding ends in 2004, UWM and its partners have agreed to provide services to GEAR UP students until the last class of sixth grade students graduates from high school and enrolls in college.

By working with entire grade levels of students and staying with them through high school graduation, GEAR UP is creating precollege and postsecondary options for all of its students. Throughout middle and high school, students and their families receive an array of services and resources from GEAR UP and its community partners.

Along with the school staff and the program’s community partners, GEAR UP is putting programs in place to help students improve reading comprehension and pass the MPS Eighth Grade Proficiencies. Students receive individual and small group tutoring and ongoing mentoring, and participate in regular campus visits and educational field trips. The staff also works with the schools to reduce chronic truancy and suspension rates, and increase parental involvement. In addition, GEAR UP provides professional development programs for teachers.

GEAR UP student services specialists are involved in school academic operations, and are an integral part of the school staff. Their access to students during the school day has helped them gain the students’ confidence and form good working relationships with teachers and parents. Many students have noted that learning has become more meaningful and important to them since GEAR UP came to their schools. Teachers believe that many of their students are showing significant gains in their school attendance and grades.

Overall, GEAR UP has made significant strides in a relatively short period. Shortly after GEAR UP was funded, Assistant Director Maria Torres worked with the staff to develop a mission statement that would be used on all of the program’s promotional materials. The mission statement, BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS, aptly describes the vision and commitment of the program staff and community partners. Their energy and enthusiasm are based on the belief that all children can learn.

To request additional information about GEAR UP, stop in the main office in Mitchell Hall, Room 194 or call (414) 229-2845.
Travis Jones

Travis Jones had no intention of going to college until UWM’s Pre-College Center (predecessor to Pre-College Academy) staff visited Custer High School during his sophomore year. “I didn’t know I had college skills, so I was in print shop planning to go into the trades,” he says.

Jones signed up and became a regular precollege participant. The experience “not only helped me better my grades in high school, it gave me the self-esteem I needed to pursue college,” he says.

Jones, now an advisor with UWM’s Academic Opportunity Center, attended precollege programs for two years to raise his grades and build his skill level. He took advantage of tutoring services, classes, and special programs.

By his senior year he had earned a summer scholarship to work as a science research assistant with Assistant Vice Chancellor Ruth Williams.

Through the precollege experience, Jones’ grades improved. He gained confidence, and decided to apply to UWM. “UWM became a natural choice because of the help I received,” he says.

Murrelisa Starr

Murrelisa Starr was a budding sixth grade pianist in 1992 when she attended her first precollege class— a piano camp— at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. The program was in its second year under the direction of Carl Meredith, now director of UWM’s Pre-College Academy.

She already had performed at the Pfister Hotel and supper clubs in the Milwaukee area through a local organization, so a piano camp really appealed to her.

“At the music camp, we learned to play the harp, African drums, and participate in opera,” she says. In a science camp she dissected a cow’s eye and cow’s brain. According to Starr, the intensity of each topic helped develop more interest in the subject. Other camps included math and engineering.

“It was the UWM GEST program that made me decide I wanted to be an engineer,” she says. “The way precollege is structured, there is so much you can develop. You could learn about yourself,” she says. The UWM precollege experience also showed her what life is like on a college campus.

Starr attended Milwaukee High School of the Arts, continued to play piano and the saxophone, and graduated 12th in her class in 1997. She returned to UW-Platteville on a full scholarship, and after a year and a half transferred to UWM to be closer to home. She is a senior engineering major.

At UWM, Starr reconnected with a precollege friend through the National Society for Black Engineers (NSBE). They became involved in its Pre-College Initiative (PCI), and soon were recruited to help with the program. Although Starr has a heavy course load, she has done campus tours for several precollege programs, including Planning for the Future for fifth through eighth graders.

While precollege gave Starr the direction to become an engineer, internships through UWM’s College of Engineering and Applied Science have helped her to narrow the field.

She contacted the National Society for Black Engineers, and professionals recommended that she try mechanical engineering because of its variety. She enjoyed a mechanical engineering internship at Hayes Brakes, the sole supplier of brakes to Harley Davidson. Last summer she started an internship at Miller Brewery in project management, interacting with electrical, mechanical, and industrial engineers to implement a new packaging line. She made three trips to their plant in Plano, Texas, to see new equipment installed in January.

While engineering studies, work, and her precollege job have left Starr with little time for the piano, she believes that music has made her a well-rounded person and a better engineer. One thing is certain: the precollege experience has helped Starr shape her future.
Edward Jones says, “I didn’t think I would get that type of support elsewhere.”

Once here, Jones utilized the services of African American Student Services. “I had fewer problems adjusting to college life,” he says. “I already had the fundamentals of how to problem solve, how to use resources, get my books, take notes, go to my professors ahead of time, and go to a tutor right from the beginning.”

Jones majored in history with a minor in geography. After graduating in 1992, he worked for a year as an interim advisor in the Office of African American Student Academic Services. While there he led a support group for African American males, and matched business leaders with students who wanted to go into the professions.

Jones was also trained as a paralegal, and dreamed of becoming a lawyer. After his term at UWM ended, however, he went into social work here and in Louisiana, where his ailing grandmother lived. Their close relationship increased his interest in the elderly, whom he helped through his social work. He earned a Master of Social Work at Southern University in New Orleans after her death.

Jones returned to Milwaukee in 1997, and worked as a case manager at a transition housing center. He was hired as an advisor in the UWM Academic Opportunity Center in fall 2000 to work with about 200 students.

“You actually get a chance to shape individuals’ lives,” he says. “Most of my advisees are 18 or 19, and don’t know what they want to do. By telling them about my experiences, I can guide them.”

He helps them think about school and future employment, looking at the job market as well as their interests. “No one showed me how to be marketable...how to take advantage of resources such as career development,” he says.

Having been here just eight years ago, Jones is not far removed from his advisees’ experiences. “I feel like I am in a position to give something back,” he says.

Christopher Vega

EDUCATIONAL TALENT SEARCH STUDENT PROFILE

by Elizabeth Glaser

The first word that comes to mind when talking to Christopher Vega is “determination.” The word “failure” is not part of this Marquette University High School senior’s vocabulary. Despite any obstacle he encounters, Chris is getting things done the best that he can.

Chris began participating in the UWM Educational Talent Search program while he was in the eighth grade. Since then, he’s taken advantage of many program services, including campus visits, workshops, and tutoring.

Chris, who is interested in sports, talks positively about his high school experience. In the past four years he has participated in CONCLAVE, Meet the Wilderness, and Model UN, in addition to being a student trainer. His mother refers to him as “Mr. Volunteer.” He donates much of his time to Children’s Hospital, the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and the Blood Center.

Interested in sports medicine, Chris is doing all he can to prepare himself for the journey ahead. It is obvious that high school is only the beginning of his many successes.
Most fifth graders don’t get to visit a hospital unless they’re sick, and they don’t usually get to go swimming during the school day. But a visit to the hospital and a good swim on a hot summer day are among two of Gaoyouapa Moua’s favorite memories of her UWM precollege experience.

Gaoyouapa, who is 11 years old, learned a lot about college and about careers in health fields through the School of Allied Health Professions Office of Diversity’s Health Sciences Academy.

“Going to college is costly, and I want to make sure my children explore many careers and ideas so they find what really interests them.”

Joua Moua, a Hmong immigrant, learned that lesson in her own education. She invested time and energy in earning an associate degree in social work, only to find that she didn’t want to pursue a career in that field. She is now a peer professional at Humboldt Park Elementary School.

She and her husband, Chee, value education and encourage their children to do well in school and take advantage of extra opportunities like UWM’s programs. As an immigrant, she didn’t learn to read or write English until she was 14. “I remember learning to print my ABCs in English. I had to struggle for my own education, so I want to help my children make good choices about their education.”

Gaoyouapa hasn’t decided yet where she’ll go to college or what her major will be, but she has a wide variety of interests. She plays basketball and also enjoys volleyball and dancing. She won first place in a 21-school spelling bee, and also won a first prize in the D.A.R.E. drug education program’s essay contest. Math and science are among her favorite subjects at school, which is what led her to the Health Sciences Academy precollege program. “I really liked it because they had fun stuff to help me prepare for high school and get ready to go to college,” says Gaoyouapa.

The parents balance Chee’s job at the Social Security Administration and a family business selling Hmong market bags and purses with a busy schedule of extra classes for the children. All four Moua children, ranging in age from 9 to 14, have attended a variety of enrichment and college preparation programs. In addition to the Health Sciences Academy, Gaoyouapa has taken classes through UWM’s College for Kids.

“I do a lot of running around and driving to campus,” says Joua Moua, “but I want to open up the doors of education for my children.”
Student Success Program students toured the Broadcasting and Journalism Museum in downtown Chicago.
Leandra Foster is an honor roll student who has maintained a 3.5 GPA since the sixth grade. As an eighth grader at the Indian Community School, she enjoyed drawing, playing basketball, and working on science projects. Because she likes to draw clothes, she wants to be a fashion designer. But she also wants “to be a police officer or an investigator, like my dad,” she says. Leandra’s father, M’Johno Foster, is a police sergeant with the Milwaukee Police Department. Her mother, an Ojibwe, works at the Potawatomi Bingo Casino.

When asked about her college plans, Leandra answers without hesitation. “I want to go to UWM. I like the campus a lot!” While attending Hartford Avenue School two years ago, Leandra heard about UWM’s precollege programs for the first time.

Since then, she has participated in the Mini-Course Program during the academic year and College for Kids during the summer. She intends to continue taking precollege classes at UWM because “they are fun and I learn something new every time,” she says.

The oldest of five sisters, Leandra has many talents. She has won several trophies in martial arts. “My proudest moment was when I won first place in the Karate tournament,” she says shyly.

Leandra loves to babysit and has been involved in community service projects. She has volunteered at day-care centers, the Milwaukee Public Museum, and other organizations to earn community service hours for the Aspire Scholarship program at the Indian Community School. If she meets all criteria for the program, including a GPA requirement, the scholarship will pay her tuition at a private high school.

Leandra has indeed accomplished her goal, and will be attending Milwaukee Lutheran High School in fall. After that, she intends to enroll at UWM.