



# PRESS RELEASE



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## **Louisiana Resident Timenee Thomas to Participate in the GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy**

BATON ROUGE – Timenee Thomas has been selected to participate in the inaugural GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy (GUALA), a 12-month leadership development program for alumni of the federal GEAR UP program. The selected Alumni Leaders will travel to Washington, DC, in June 2013 to receive training on grassroots and social media advocacy, as well as leadership skills during a week-long retreat. The Alumni Leaders will then return home to work toward creating positive change in education policy for their younger peers. Thomas was selected from a nationwide pool of candidates for the inaugural class of 30 Alumni Leaders.

GEAR UP, or Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, is a federally funded college access and success program serving approximately 700,000 low-income students across 43 states and 3 territories. GEAR UP programs serve students starting in 7th grade, and follow the students through high school graduation or first year of postsecondary studies. GEAR UP programs are designed to meet local educational needs. Services often include academic tutoring, financial literacy, FAFSA completion, college tours, parent engagement programs, and more.

This region is served by Louisiana GEAR UP, which is based in Baton Rouge, LA, and currently serves 10th and 11th graders in 12 parishes across the state. Louisiana GEAR UP serves over 7,000 10th and 11th graders in 30 high schools across Louisiana by providing scholarships, summer programming, school-based club programming (Explorers' Clubs), writing contests, and grant funding for school improvement.

GUALA is a new program to engage alumni in a national effort to educate lawmakers and the public about the value of investing in targeted college access and success services. Using personal stories, Alumni Leaders will articulate the impact GEAR UP had on their success in postsecondary education.

After graduating from Bunkie High School, a GEAR UP school in the 2002-2008 Louisiana GEAR UP grant cycle, Ms. Thomas went on to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education from Louisiana Tech University.

Thomas believes that Louisiana GEAR UP played a major role in determining her career path and motivated her to work with low-income schools and students in an effort to help them become more successful.

GUALA is a program of the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCEEP), the national training and technical assistance provider for the federal GEAR UP program. The Kresge Foundation provided funding to support the program.

“We welcome the inaugural class of the GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy,” said Nathan Monell, NCEEP President and CEO. “These students exemplify the spirit of GEAR UP, and illustrate how the federal investment in the GEAR UP program is having a direct effect on these students’ success in postsecondary education. We look forward to sharing their powerful stories with the community.”

In response to the news, Assistant Director for Louisiana GEAR UP, Shannon J. Domingue said, “We are thrilled that Ms. Thomas has been selected to participate in the GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy and know that she will represent her community, our state, and Louisiana GEAR UP exceptionally well.”

For more information about Louisiana GEAR UP, please contact Delreese Hector at 225-219-0921 or visit [www.lagearup.com](http://www.lagearup.com). To learn more about the GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy, please contact Judy Martinez at the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships at 202-530-1135 x 104 or [www.edpartnerships.org](http://www.edpartnerships.org).

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