

Nicholas Mathews, GEAR UP Alumni Leader

National Council for Community and Education Partnerships

Nicholas Mathews is the GEAR UP Ambassador for Nevada State College in Henderson, Nevada. He was first introduced to the GEAR UP program as a freshman in high school at Mojave High School in North Las Vegas, Nevada. At the time, his high school was better known for having students that were sent to juvenile detention centers or behavioral schools rather than having students graduating and going on to higher education. Without GEAR UP, Nicholas may not be the first-generation college graduate that he is today.

GEAR UP introduced him to his first college campus when he took a tour of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). The program exposed him to the world outside of his community and taught him to believe that he could strive for much more. By participating in GEAR UP activities and after-school tutoring, Nicholas could stay away from the distractions that might otherwise derail his goals. GEAR UP acted as a support system and motivated him to perform his best academically.

Nicholas graduated from high school as the first African-American male to earn the honor of being the class valedictorian. Without the support and direction from his GEAR UP family, he earned a 4.72 weighted grade point average and earned a full academic scholarship to UNLV. Once on campus, Nicholas served as the President of the Theta Sigma Undergraduate Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., and Parliamentarian of the Black Student Organization before earning his Bachelor's Degree in Psychology.

In addition, Nicholas was afforded the opportunity to participate in the GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy in Washington, DC. There he learned about the power of his own voice and how to use his story to advocate on behalf of others. As a GEAR UP Alumni Leader, Nicholas has advocated for GEAR UP before elected officials and their staff at the national and state levels.

Today, he applies what he has learned in service of over 5,500 students throughout Nevada as a GEAR UP Ambassador for Nevada State College (NSC). He is deeply moved to give back to students that need guidance and support just as he did along the journey to higher education. Nicolas serves as the Committee Chair for NSC's Men of Color Committee that was created to increase enrollment, retention, and degree completion rates for Men of Color in Nevada. In addition, he is also the Faculty Advisor for the Black Student Organization, which is a student-lead organization on campus.