Supporting Success: The Higher Education in Prison Key Performance Indicator Framework

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Introduction

Higher education in prison not only changes students' lives but also holds the unique potential to fundamentally transform society and help neutralize key facets of inequity in our national postsecondary education system. Our nation's correctional facilities disproportionately incarcerate Black, Indigenous, and people of color and people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, meaning the justice system imprisons individuals from the same populations that have been historically discriminated against by our nation's postsecondary institutions.

Even as the country reels from a global pandemic and the correctional system goes on lockdown, Higher Education in Prison (HEP) programs have been deemed essential in many states, with correctional facilities themselves recognizing the importance of continuing educational programming. Prior to the current public health crisis, the correctional sector valued HEP for a number of reasons, including longer-term objectives like easing the reentry process for HEP alumni upon release by improving the chances of successful employment, housing, and other economic security measures that lead to lower rates of reincarceration. In justifying why HEP should continue even during efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19, correctional facilities have highlighted the immediate-term benefits of these programs, including how they improve facility conditions for staff and non-enrolled residents and help students look to the future.

At present, however, an accurate understanding of the scope of these benefits—to individuals, facilities, and communities—is limited because little research has been conducted to properly identify and benchmark quality postsecondary opportunities in prisons. As ongoing federal and state policy debates try to determine whether to lift current legislative and statutory barriers to postsecondary access for justice-involved individuals[1] (e.g., restoring Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated students), better data about HEP programs would enable the responsible stewardship of public and private dollars towards high-quality programs that lead to successful outcomes for students.

The **Higher Education in Prison Key Performance Indicator Framework** is designed to help HEP programs measure the impact they have on students, institutions, facilities, and communities by including indicators that help measure *student success outcomes, academic quality, civic engagement,* and *soft skill development*. This framework applies to programs of all types and structures, from in-person degree programs to distance-learning credit programs, and enables HEP practitioners across different institutional sectors to take stock of their role in the rehabilitation and restoration of students' educational opportunities in correctional facilities across the United States. This report concludes with a set of **policy and practice recommendations** for HEP practitioners, correctional administrators, and state and federal policymakers to improve access to quality HEP for incarcerated populations.

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[1] "Justice-involved student/individual/person" is the human-centered language that refers to a person who has interacted with the justice system. For HEP programming within a correctional facility, the term usually refers to anyone currently incarcerated, though it may also be used to describe alumni who have been released from prison, those who are under local, state, or federal supervision, or those who experienced alternative sentencing.

The Impact of Higher Education in Prison

Higher education in American prisons began well over two centuries ago, ranging from religious instruction to academic and vocational programming. Over the course of that long history, little research has been conducted to assess the impact of these educational opportunities on students, facilities, or communities.

The limited research on this impact has focused primarily on recidivism reduction as a success indicator for HEP, partially due to the political salience of topics like public safety and security and partially due to corrections data availability. A 2018 meta-analysis of correctional education programs is consistently cited by HEP advocates as rationale for supporting these programs with public dollars, specifically the finding that students who participated in educational opportunities while incarcerated were 28 percent less likely to recidivate after re-entering their community.[i]

Yet, recidivism reduction, while an important metric for disrupting the cycle of reincarceration, fails to account for the complexity of higher education's transformative potential. This comprehensive value is identified more accurately through important intermediate outcomes such as the continued education, employment, and civic engagement of students, which may improve their experience during incarceration and re-entry upon release.

The Need for Better Data

Increased bipartisan interest in expanding postsecondary access to incarcerated students creates a prime environment for more accurate measurement and communication of HEP program success to better inform both federal and state policy debates. In 2015, the Obama administration introduced the Second Chance Pell (SCP) Pilot program, using the authority of the U.S. Department of Education Experimental Sites Initiative (ESI) to allow higher education institutions (selected by application) to enroll incarcerated students using Pell funds. The SCP pilot aimed to assess whether waiving the Pell Grant-eligibility ban for incarcerated students—which has been in effect since its inclusion in the Violent Crimes Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994—would create more postsecondary opportunities and degrees for this population.

Since the creation of the SCP pilot, HEP programs in 28 states have awarded 2,071 college certificates, 2,017 associate degrees, and 365 bachelor's degrees. In 2019, 16,898 justice-involved students received Federal Pell Grant funds from 64 institutions of higher education.[ii] Unfortunately, the SCP program did not allocate additional resources for evaluation or assessment, limiting researchers' ability to assess the broader impact of the experiment beyond insights from students and administrators. Nonetheless, narratives[iii] from students and administrators speak not only to the value and impact that they have had overall but also to the challenges of capacity and technical assistance that are still needed.

Better data on these programs could not be more urgent. For the first time in 25 years, there is significant bipartisan support for Pell restoration for incarcerated individuals. The recent 2020 expansion of this program to include an additional 67 postsecondary institutions demonstrates continued interest in improving postsecondary access for incarcerated students, though the expansion has not yet required any additional evaluative responsibilities. In addition, numerous legislative proposals have been introduced in Congress to restore Pell Grant eligibility permanently, lifting the ban for incarcerated students outside of the pilot program as well. Similarly, states are continuing to re-examine their financial

aid barriers for justice-involved students, with New Jersey and California recently passing legislation to remove barriers to their state-based aid programs for this population.

As these policy debates over access continue, both practitioners and policymakers could utilize more comprehensive data to measure impact, as well as to amplify the HEP program and support models that lead to positive student outcomes beyond recidivism. In 2019, the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison and the Prison University Project[iv] published a report highlighting quality guidelines for HEP programs and practitioners, including program design and rigor, partnerships and collaborations across stakeholder groups, faculty recruitment and training, curriculum development, pedagogical theory and practice, instructional resources, and student advising and support. Key performance indicators in each of these areas would enable practitioners to assess baselines, measure continuous improvement in the interest of better student outcomes, and use data to advocate for more financial resources and support from institutional, state, and federal policymakers.

The Higher Education in Prison Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Framework

In response to the expressed need from both practitioners and policymakers for better data on current HEP programming, IHEP partnered with three programs—the University of Iowa's Liberal Arts Beyond Bars program, Holy Cross College and the University of Notre Dame's Moreau College Initiative, and Raritan Valley Community College—to examine existing data collection practices and develop a new framework of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that would help HEP programs collect and report better data on their impact. These sites were selected as partners in developing the KPI framework because of their history of programmatic success, diversity of institutional type and structure, and strong partnerships with correctional administrators in their respective states. These three institutions were already collecting substantial data on their HEP experiences and had been working with institutional offices to craft, analyze, and disseminate their findings. Each site was collecting many of the student success outcomes already, with some gathering informal stories around civic engagement and soft skills, and will be expanding their assessment to include the other categories in more formalized ways. These three programs will serve as future pilots for the framework, with existing IRB approval and have already begun data collection amongst faculty, staff, and both current and former students. Administrators from all three programs served on the Advisory Council for this project and have been extensively involved with the creation of the overall framework, individual metrics, and methods of analysis. The William J. Shaw Center for Children and Families at the University of Notre Dame has also been essential in the creation of data metrics and connecting HEP assessment to communities within and outside correctional contexts. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: IHEP Partnerships with HEP Programs
The three programs, below, represent different programmatic structures, curricula, and regions, all while serving as important examples of high-quality and equitable postsecondary prison education and strong working relationships across higher education and corrections.

Iowa: 76 students, 1 facility, Second Chance Pell
University of Iowa's Liberal Arts Beyond Bars (UILABB) is a project of the University College at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. In addition to in-person courses taught by university faculty, UILABB

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also provides online associate degree pathways in partnership with Iowa Central Community College (ICCC), a SCP site, in Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Building on the success of the UILABB-ICCC partnership, the program now offers additional college credit for enrollment in extracurricular programs like physical education and the decade-old Oakdale Community Choir, which includes both incarcerated individuals and outside community members, highlighting an important example of civic engagement among justice-involved students. As an extension of the University of Iowa, UILABB is a strong representation of the type of program created in partnership with Research-1 institutions in conjunction with the Board of Regents for the State of Iowa and the Iowa Department of Corrections.

Indiana: 90 students, 1 facility, Second Chance Pell

As an academic collaboration between Holy Cross College and the University of Notre Dame, the Moreau College Initiative housed at the Westville Correctional Facility is a unique example of strategic partnerships between a baccalaureate college, a Research-1 university, and the Indiana Department of Corrections.

Enrolled students can earn college credits toward a Holy Cross College Associate of Arts (AA) degree and can then transition into a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree program. Holy Cross and University of Notre Dame faculty teach classes in the facility, with credit being awarded by Holy Cross College. This partnership not only engages multiple state offices but also multiple institutions, faculty across disciplines, and educators and policymakers across the state of Indiana. The metrics shared across both institutions and the Department of Corrections highlight the need for a strong partnership and shared mission to ensure valuable success outcomes are achieved.

New Jersey: 600 students, 7 facilities, Second Chance Pell

The New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons Consortium (NJ-STEP) is an association of higher education institutions in New Jersey that works in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Corrections and State Parole Board, to provide higher education courses. NJ-STEP serves all students under the custody of the State of New Jersey while they are incarcerated and assists in the transition to college life upon their release.

Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) confers the Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts while Rutgers University – Newark confers the Bachelor of Arts degree in Justice Studies. Under this strategic statewide initiative, NJ-STEP counselors, who are assigned to each facility and work on-site with the students, serve as liaisons between correctional facilities and faculty across the state. The counselors also assist with academic advising, registration, financial aid, recruitment, and pre-release. Researchers have raised up RVCC and the NJ-STEP program as strong examples of statewide partnerships highlighting the success students can have when institutions work together and combine forces with employers, correctional administrators, and the community.

Developing the "Higher Education in Prison Key Performance Indicator Framework"

IHEP has historically advocated for data-driven policy and practice. Higher education institutions, systems, and policymakers know that timely, high-quality, complete, accessible, and disaggregated postsecondary data is critical to promoting student success and closing equity gaps in college access and success. In 2016, IHEP produced Toward Convergence[v], a nationwide core set of postsecondary outcome metrics designed to create a transparent and equitable data set to facilitate effective policies and practices. Anchored in a decade of research from experts in the field of higher education, this National Metrics Framework organizes 31 indicators/data points along categories of Performance, Efficiency, and Equity, ultimately examining the extent to which institutions use an equity lens to measure and analyze student success and resource allocation. Building upon the National Metrics Framework, IHEP set out to develop the "Higher Education in Prison Key Performance Indicator Framework" to apply this data-driven approach to improving equitable student success to higher education offered specifically in the correctional context. In partnership with experts across various sectors who constituted the project's Advisory Council, IHEP developed this framework as an adaptable way to assess HEP programs, capture their value, highlight the complexity of the student experience while incarcerated, and ensure that HEP programs are measured equitably in comparison to their main campus counterparts.

The Advisory Council collaboration included extensive debate regarding which metrics best measured "quality" of not only HEP but higher education writ large. Post-college outcomes, in particular, failed to communicate the value that many placed on postsecondary education—leading to the creation of civic engagement and soft skill development as two distinct categories where partners felt it was important to highlight HEP impact.

In developing the framework, IHEP also consulted current students in correctional facilities to ensure that student perspectives were represented in assessing program impact. During one Advisory Council meeting, members went into one of the partner correctional facilities to meet with over 50 students to discuss the overarching framework and collect information on what students hope to gain from their educational experiences and overall satisfaction with the HEP programs in which they participate. Due to a security situation, this meeting had to be conducted as a general assembly with small roundtables, which made it difficult for the Advisory Council to collect enough information to adequately include student perspectives. However, following this visit, an Advisory Council member who serves as both the director of a HEP program and one of its faculty members, entered the same facility and was able to more

deeply interrogate the framework with students to collect specific feedback on terminology, methodology, and accessibility.

Through the evolution of the framework, it became apparent that HEP program impact falls into four informative categories: *student success outcomes, academic quality, civic engagement,* and *soft skill development*. The next section describes these impact categories in more detail, followed by the KPI framework outlining the indicators that could be used to measure HEP impact.

Student Success Outcomes

Student success outcomes measure how well students achieve their educational, financial, and social goals. These student success metrics (e.g., credit accumulation, credit completion, GPA, employment, and income) enable institutions to enhance program delivery and institutional accountability to lead to improved student outcomes. These metrics also provide a common language for both educational and correctional administrators to accurately collect information on the success of their students. Equitable access to and success in higher education relies on information that reflects the higher education experience of all students within each institution, yet most incarcerated students are missing or invisible in the current student data systems. Accordingly, wherever possible, this framework includes student outcome metrics that the National Metrics Framework recommends higher education institutions use to assess student outcomes for their main campus students as well, in order to make sure that institutions can better understand the success of their incarcerated students compared to their non-incarcerated counterparts in similar programs of study.

Academic Quality

Academic quality metrics (e.g., time spent on coursework, faculty credentials, critical thinking) measure the rigor of higher education programming to ensure that programs inside facilities are designed according to the standards that an institution has set for its main campus students. Unless institutions can demonstrate that the standard of programming is equitable and comparable across environments, expanded access to higher education becomes an empty promise. Institutions offering programming inside correctional facilities cannot view HEP programs as "side projects" or "community engagement initiatives" that are divorced from academic standards of quality. HEP programs must create an equitable environment where students are challenged, held to high expectations, and provided with substantial learning experiences to improve their present and future.

Civic Engagement

There exist a variety of definitions of civic engagement and a wide array of views of what type of civic education is appropriate for colleges and universities to promote. Civic engagement is defined here as:

> individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy.[vi]

Civic engagement metrics measure how higher education impacts students' sense of moral and civic responsibility.[vii] While difficult to ensure a similar model of civic opportunities within correctional education due to the restrictive nature of prison environments, incarcerated students still civically engage the world around them, both inside and outside of prison walls. For example, many incarcerated students

mentor their peers, engage in conversations around politics and social issues, and volunteer in religious and service organizations within the facility.

As individuals whose civic rights have often been removed, incarcerated populations are poised to benefit from increased civic engagement. Further, civic engagement during incarceration will better serve individuals as they are reintegrated into society upon release.

Soft Skills

Soft skills metrics measure the non-cognitive, non-technical, and interpersonal proficiencies—also known as "people skills" —identified by employers as essential for success in today's workplace. Technology and globalization are changing the modern workplace. Needs for human capital are shifting accordingly and today's employers seek more than just technical skills in their employees. Employers and communities are showing a growing demand for employees and citizens to work in dynamic teams, adapt to rapidly changing environments, develop strong communication skills, analyze problems quickly, and show empathy toward others. These types of skills are transferable across industries and occupations and lead to better employee outcomes. Recent research found that 75 percent of long-term job success depends on people skills but only 25 percent on technical knowledge.[viii]

HEP programs can help students develop a variety of hard and soft skills that employers and the general public value. In addition, HEP programs can also develop other soft skills like hope and trust, traits not always associated or emphasized inside correctional facilities. The emphasis on positive individual development and motivation found in many HEP programs is often what makes these programs essential and useful tools for higher education overall.

Figure 3: HEP Key Performance Indicators & Definitions

All variables must be disaggregated by *race, ethnicity, gender, age, generation status, geographic region, military status,* and any other demographic identity markers available to ensure an equitable understanding of the information collected. Disaggregated data illuminate inequities and allow informed interrogation of what systems have enabled such inequities to exist. Since many under resourced communities are already overrepresented in the correctional system, data collection systems should be designed to ensure that all underserved groups are identified and that intersectional identities are also identifiable. When federal, state, and institutional policymakers have access to more detailed data, they can enact evidence-based policies that address such inequities.

Student Success		How can we measure the **student success outcomes** (e.g., retention, grades, credits) for HEP students and how they compare to their main campus counterparts?
	Key Performance Indicator	Definition
	Enrollment	Twelve-month headcount that includes all undergraduate students who enroll at any point during the calendar year
	Credit Completion	The number of credits completed within a program by an individual student
	Credits Attempted	The number of credits attempted within a program by an individual student, including all credits, even those that were not completed

	Retention Rate	The percentage of students in a cohort who are enrolled in the subsequent semester
	Corrections Transfer Rate	The percentage of students who transfer from one correctional institution to another
	Institutional Transfer Rate	The percentage of students who transfer from one higher education institution to another
	Graduation Rate	The percentage of students in a cohort who earn the credential sought at their initial institution
	Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)	The average value of the accumulated final grades earned in courses throughout a student's enrollment
	Completers	The number of students who complete a credential in a given academic year
	Recidivism Rate	The percentage of program participants who are found guilty of a new crime or violation of parole within three years of their release from custody
	HEP Employment Rate	The percentage of former students from a prison program with any reported earnings at one, five, and ten years after exit from the institution; can be compared to those incarcerated at the institution who did not participate in HEP
	Institutional Employment Rate	The percentage of former students with any reported earnings at one, five, and ten years after exit from the institution
	HEP Income	The annual earnings of former students one, five, and ten years after exit from the prison program (excludes zeros); can be compared to those incarcerated at the institution who did not participate in HEP
	Institutional Income	The annual earnings of former students one, five, and ten years after exit from the institution (excludes zeros)
	Economic Status	Pell Grant receipt as proxy for low-income or economic status; Only for SCP sites
	Prison Security Level	Federal designation of institutional level of security (e.g., minimum, low, medium, high, administrative)
	Sentence Length	Length of incarceration based on judicial sentencing
	Time Served	Amount of time in months that a student has already been incarcerated for their current sentence
	Remaining Sentence	Amount of time remaining in months on a student's sentence
	Tickets/ Disciplinary History	Number and description of disciplinary infractions on student record
	Prior College Experience	The past postsecondary history of enrolled students (e.g., some college, no degree; associate degree; bachelor's degree)
Academic Quality		How can we measure the **academic quality** (e.g., student sense of belonging, faculty workload, faculty credentials and experience) of

		HEP programs and how that quality is consistent with comparable programs of study in main campus environments?
	Key Performance Indicator	**Definition**
	Student Engagement	The degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning
	Grading Methods	The method and rubrics used to assess students in their assignments
	Faculty Qualifications	The qualifications held by faculty members teaching courses including academic discipline, degree attainment, and teaching experience
	Time Spent on Coursework	The amount of time a student spends on their assignments for class and the amount of time faculty spend on grading assignments
	Course Materials	The textbooks, media, or other instructional tools being utilized for classroom instruction and used for or in conjunction with a course
	Critical Thinking	Students' abilities to actively and skillfully conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action
	Learning Outcomes	Statements that describe the knowledge or skills students should acquire by the end of a particular assignment, class, course, or program, and help students understand why that knowledge and those skills will be useful to them
	Academic Motivation	A student's desire regarding academic subjects and their education incorporating their understanding of self-efficacy, determination, and resilience to continue their learning
Civic Engagement		How can we measure HEP students' own understanding of **civic engagement** (e.g., civic action, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, diversity attitudes) formed through their involvement in HEP programs?
	Key Performance Indicator	**Definition**
	Civic Action	Students' intentions to become involved in future community service or civic engagement, focusing on participation and memberships in communities and community organizations
	Interpersonal & Problem-Solving Skills	Students' ability to listen, work cooperatively, communicate, take the role of the other, think logically and analytically, and solve problems
	Diversity Attitudes	Students' attitudes toward diversity and interest in relating to culturally different people
	Political Awareness	Students' extent to which they pay attention to politics and understand what they encounter

	Leadership Skills	Students' personal assessments of their own leadership skills and understanding of their ability to motivate and inspire others and build an effective team to achieve a combined vision
Soft Skills		How can we measure **soft skills** (e.g., adaptability, empathy, trust, creativity, open-mindedness) developed among incarcerated students and HEP alumni?
	Key Performance Indicator	**Definition**
	Hope	Students' understanding of the positive feeling that something desired can be had or will happen
	Adaptability	Students' ability to embrace challenges, try new things, and learn quickly in changing situations
	Empathy	Students' understanding of the feelings of others and the utilization of multiple perspectives to make decisions
	Trust	Students' willingness to believe in others and be transparent about their actions and beliefs
	Creativity	Students' ability to find new and inventive ways to solve problems and explore the unexplored
	Open-Mindedness	Students' openness to other people's ideas and experiences, while also considering alternatives to everyday problems
	Time Management	Students' ability to prioritize responsibilities and use their time productively across school, work, and personal time

Program Readiness

In order for HEP programs to effectively use this suggested framework to evaluate their impact on students, they would be greatly assisted by 1) **strong partnerships across sectors** and **2) comprehensive data availability**.

To this first point, institutions of higher learning and correctional facilities are two systems that have not historically coordinated at the same level within states, but consistent coordination is vital to the success of any HEP program. Leaders from both sectors must set shared, mutually determined goals; maintain consistent communication; and realize their vision with shared resources. Further, they must create a system of accountability and assign responsibility for executing HEP program plans. The three HEP programs highlighted in this research reside in states with the capacity to invest time and energy into working across these siloes that exist among postsecondary and correctional institutions.

To the second point, challenges in collecting comprehensive, equity-focused data on HEP may include a lack of capacity for program administrators to devote a substantial amount of time to collecting information beyond what their institutions already require. For SCP sites, data required by the Department of Education are mostly aggregate and focus on financial aid, enrollment, and enrollment intensity indicators. In both cases, state and federal compliance does not often include success and completion indicators, and certainly not indicators that examine or measure post-release experiences beyond continued enrollment.

The collection of the metrics included in this framework, especially the student success outcomes, would be easier if HEP programs were included in national postsecondary data repositories, like the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), and institutional research and/or accrediting agencies, in addition to state-level departments of corrections and departments of labor, and the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics. In its current form, the data must be sourced individually by program administrators, without the aid of institutional research offices or data-sharing systems. With limited capacity, this can be a time-consuming process, but the framework was developed with these considerations in mind and therefore can be adapted to utilize more readily available information.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

IHEP will utilize this framework to collect data from the three partner HEP sites in 2020-2021 to assess the impact of their programs on their justice-involved students. The research design was developed in collaboration with researchers at each partner site and has been approved by the institutional review boards at each partner site, which importantly requires additional layers of approval for research that involves individuals who are incarcerated. The design will require a combination of survey instruments and focus groups in order to collect data on each indicator and capture the complexity of measuring impact according to the framework's four categories.

In the meantime, as legislative debates continue in real-time over the impact of HEP on students and their communities, IHEP offers the following recommendations to HEP practitioners, correctional administrators, and state and federal policymakers interested in expanding access to quality postsecondary opportunities for justice-involved populations.

Practitioners

HEP practitioners can make assessment and data collection a priority by utilizing this more holistic framework to ensure that all students are succeeding in equitable ways. To do so practitioners can:

- **Regularly assess their program outcomes.** Practitioners can utilize this framework throughout the administration of their program, including pre- and post-semester or quarter completion.

- **Partner with institutional research (IR) offices on campus.** In order to capture the data needed, practitioners can partner with IR offices on campus to establish protocols in compliance with main campus practices. This will ensure that data is captured in an equitable way for all students enrolled at the institution.

- **Adapt the framework for the ever-changing landscape of HEP.** The KPI framework, categories, and methodologies are all adaptable for different program offerings, delivery methods, and student populations. Consistently adapting and molding the framework and assessment methods will ensure that the data remains timely, appropriate, and useable.

Correctional Administrators

As more colleges and universities consider offering higher education in prison, correctional administrators may struggle to determine which programs best suit their needs and students. The KPI framework encourages correctional administrators to:

- **Reexamine the institutional mission of corrections.** Most departments of corrections are tasked with the safety and rehabilitation of the incarcerated individuals. The KPI framework showcases how justice-involved students are changing and developing, while also strengthening the community and engaging with the correctional facility in a positive way.

- **Identify opportunities for change.** Given the holistic design of this framework, correctional administrators can clearly identify where students are not developing as quickly as others and can design interventions to create even more change.

- **Develop or strengthen partnerships with community organizations.** Institutions of higher education serve as valuable resources for correctional administrators. This framework and the creation or expansion of HEP programs will assist in deeper understanding and advanced collaboration between state agencies, individual institutions, and community members, which will ultimately impact justice-involved individuals in a positive way.

State Policymakers

State policymakers and systems are critical stakeholders to the successful scaling of HEP programs. This framework demonstrates the importance of having integrated state data systems, incorporating both state higher education and corrections perspectives, adapting assessment strategies already in place, and highlighting the learning that is happening within state-run correctional environments every day. In order to encourage states to invest in HEP programs and help facilitate successful scaling statewide, state policymakers must:

- **Share data systems across institutions.** The framework works best when data is readily available from corrections, the college or university, and the state workforce. A statewide data system will better highlight both the successes of justice-involved students and areas for improvement. State data experts can also work with state legislators, encouraging them to allocate necessary funds for development and the use of data systems, while at the same time promoting strong data governance, data use, and data privacy.

- **Include HEP students in the existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS).** Currently incarcerated students must be included as enrolled college students in any statewide data system. Flagging enrollment while incarcerated will allow for more accurate reporting and policies, while also assisting in understanding the longitudinal impact of HEP.

- **Fund HEP programs.** It has been shown that higher education in prison is transformative and greatly impacts state finances, crime, and recidivism. With reallocated correctional or educational funding at the state-level, states are likely to see better use of spending, stronger employment numbers, stronger degree attainment, and a more civically engaged community. The outcomes are only possible if HEP programs have the continued resources to succeed and grow.

Federal Policymakers

Though most correctional facilities are state-run, incarceration and postsecondary education are both national issues. Federal agencies and policymakers have an important role to play in the successful

execution of HEP programs across the nation. To best support institutional, system, and state-level HEP work, federal policymakers must:

- **Restore Pell funding for incarcerated students.** Access to federal student aid must be expanded to incarcerated students to enhance the quantity and quality of higher education in prison. As policymakers assess the success and value of the SCP Pilot Program, this framework also encourages a broader conversation around the importance of higher education in prison and could illustrate the need for continued development of such programs through the experimental initiative or once Pell eligibility is restored.

- **Expand funding opportunities for HEP programs.** Higher education in prison requires adequate funding and opportunities for incarcerated students. Policymakers can dictate the resources that programs receive in order to continue and expand, as outcomes are measured more effectively. This framework also creates a common language for corrections, higher education, and social communities to discuss and evaluate these types of programs, thus providing more accurate and in-depth data to help enact targeted policies.

- **Assess the impact of Second Chance Pell.** The KPI framework provides a useful tool in examining the overall value and importance of the SCP pilot program for justice-involved students, correctional staff, colleges and universities, and the communities impacted by the justice system. Utilizing this new method of evaluation will ensure that federal tax dollars in the form of Pell Grants are having a positive impact on today's students.

Conclusion

Almost two centuries into providing postsecondary education in American prisons[ix], higher education must do better than relying on recidivism reduction as the sole measure of programmatic success. Better understanding of student outcomes, academic quality, civic engagement, and soft skill development associated with HEP will help both practitioners and policymakers create the environments within which incarcerated students can thrive.

HEP programs are consistent with the mission statements of colleges and universities; serving marginalized communities, including those disenfranchised by poverty and policing, is reason enough to establish strong partnerships with correctional facilities in order to offer quality HEP programming. Data sharing across both types of institutions can ensure that an equitable education is provided across traditional campuses and prison settings. This framework also provides policymakers with guidance for ensuring that public dollars are spent on high quality programming by explaining the impact of these programs on individuals, families, localities, and the nation.

As conversations around racial injustice in America continue, the HEP Key Performance Indicator Framework highlights the transformative impact that HEP can have on populations that have been disproportionately imprisoned by the nation's justice system. Though it addresses just part of the problems that plague the nation's justice system, offering strong postsecondary opportunities in prisons can help disrupt the cycle of re-incarceration. The HEP Key Performance Indicator framework helps support HEP programs in rising to the highest standards and expectations of their students, institutions, and communities to create a more equitable future for those currently incarcerated and beyond.

Acknowledgments

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