



# SUPPORTING SUCCESS: HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON (HEP)

## CORRECTIONS

### National Momentum Builds for Expanding Higher Education in Prison

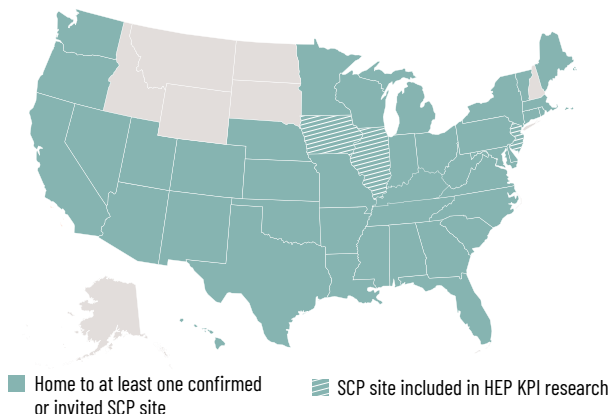
- In 2020, the **Second Chance Pell (SCP)** program welcomed a second cohort of 67 institutions in 34 states and the District of Columbia. Created in 2015, the original pilot included 64 higher education institutions to serve incarcerated students using Pell Grant funds. As of April 2020, these SCP sites have awarded 2,071 college certificates, 2,017 associate degrees, and 365 bachelor's degrees.<sup>i</sup>
- As part of an omnibus spending bill signed into law in late December 2020, **Pell Grant eligibility was reinstated** for currently incarcerated students across the country, lifting the ban that had been in place since 1994.
- While students involved in the justice system remain ineligible for **more than half (54) of the largest 100** state grant aid programs, some states are reexamining their policies. In 2020, for example, New Jersey and California both passed legislation to remove these barriers to their state need-based aid programs.<sup>ii</sup>
- The **Correctional Leaders Association** and the **Correctional Education Association** have supported restoring Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated students and have published opinion pieces underscoring the need for more quality HEP.<sup>iii</sup>

In successfully partnering with colleges or universities to provide quality higher education in prison (HEP), correctional administrators can: **improve outcomes for individuals, families, and communities; make their facilities safer; reduce recidivism; and create a more engaged community of students who are incarcerated.**

To best support Higher Education in Prison, correctional administrators should:

- **Measure progress in furthering the institutional mission of corrections.** Tasked with the safety and rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals, correctional administrators should implement the KPI framework, described on the flip side of this page, to measure how students progress and how interactions within the correctional community improve.
- **Identify evidence-driven opportunities for programmatic improvements to better serve students.** The KPI framework can clearly identify how students who are incarcerated are progressing through their studies and identify gaps between students inside and their peers on a traditional campus. The framework also identifies where support systems and other programming would best enhance student development.
- **Develop and strengthen partnerships with community organizations.** Colleges and universities can serve as valuable resources for correctional administrators. The creation or expansion of HEP can yield deeper collaboration between state agencies, individual institutions, and community members, which will ultimately positively impact students and facilities.

**Individuals who are incarcerated and enroll in postsecondary education are up to 4 times less likely to be cited for prison misconduct than those not enrolled.<sup>iv</sup>**



In September 2020, IHEP unveiled a first-of-its-kind set of metrics to measure the full impact of HEP. The **Higher Education Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Framework** offers a comprehensive set of KPIs to measure student success outcomes, academic quality, civic engagement, and soft skill development. The data collected will enable

meaningful evaluation of HEP success, promote the development and improvement of quality HEP, and support colleges and universities, corrections, and state and federal policymakers as they expand postsecondary opportunities for students in prison.

## FOUR CATEGORIES OF DATA-BASED INSIGHTS TO INFORM CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE IMPACT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN PRISON



### Retention, Completion, and Success

These KPIs measure progress and success of students involved in the justice system compared to their main-campus counterparts.



### Academic Quality

Analyzing syllabi, faculty, and course grading and assignments, these KPIs ensure the same quality of coursework offered on main campuses is offered in correctional facilities.



### Civic Engagement

These KPIs measure how college students engage with society during and after their college experience and the broader social effect of postsecondary education in correctional facilities.



### Soft Skill Development

In addition to course curricula, employers call on colleges to develop students' soft skills. These KPIs account for how postsecondary education develops characteristics and skills, like empathy and time management, both inside and outside of correctional facilities, to prepare students for the workplace and community.

**"One of the ways we can advance opportunity and make our prisons safer is by removing barriers to postsecondary education for incarcerated people."**

**Anne Precythe,**  
*Director of the Missouri Department of Corrections\**

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i. Delaney, R., & Montagnet, C. (2020). *Second chance Pell: A snapshot of the first three years*. Vera Institute of Justice. <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/second-chance-pell-snapshot-first-three-years.pdf>

ii. Education Commission of the States. (2020). *50-State comparison: State financial aid barriers for students impacted by the justice system*. <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-state-financial-aid-barriers-for-students-impacted-by-the-justice-system/>

iii. Wetzel, J. (2019, October 28). *It's time for Congress to lift the ban on Pell Grants for people in prison*. Correctional Leaders Association. <https://www.asca.net/>

iv. Duwe, G., Hallett, M., Hays, J., Jang, S., & Johnson, B. (2015). Bible college participation and prison misconduct: A preliminary analysis. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 54(5), 371-390.

v. Precythe, A. (2020, July 9). *It's time to lift the ban on Pell grants in prison*. Springfield News-Leader. <https://www.news-leader.com/story/opinion/2020/07/09/its-time-lift-ban-pell-grants-prison/5391204002/>