

# SUPPORTING SUCCESS BY SCALING QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON (HEP):

## A GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS



**Higher Education in Prison (HEP) holds enormous potential to improve students' lives, promote increased postsecondary attainment and workforce participation, disrupt cycles of incarceration, and strengthen communities.**

In order to realize this important opportunity, HEP programs must provide a quality education, be designed to meet the needs of the student population, and deliver strong outcomes.

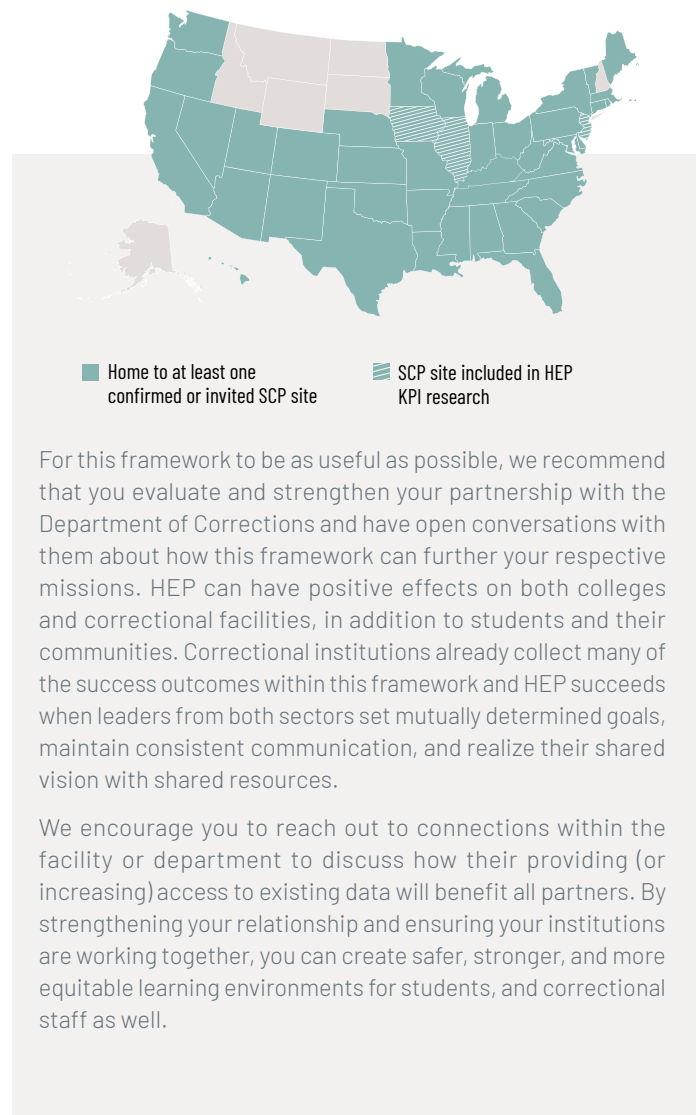
At present however, an accurate understanding of the scope of these benefits is limited because little research has been conducted to properly identify and benchmark quality postsecondary opportunities in prisons.

The Higher Education in Prison Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Framework is designed to measure the impact your program has on students, institutions, facilities, and communities by including indicators that measure student success outcomes, academic quality, civic engagement, and soft skill development.

**WIDELY APPLICABLE.** The framework applies to programs of all types and structures, from in-person degree programs to distance-learning credit programs, and equips you to take stock of your role in the rehabilitation and restoration of students in correctional facilities across the United States.

**READILY AVAILABLE.** By utilizing existing open-source tools, the HEP KPI framework is readily available to all programs. Through surveys that can be administered in person or virtually and flexible interview or focus group protocols, you can customize this framework to suit your capacity and stakeholder needs.

**VALID AND REPLICABLE.** These metrics have been adapted from existing methodologies and tools assessed for validity and replicability, ensuring your findings will be trustworthy for your campus, community, and industry partners.



### By utilizing this holistic framework, you can:

- Promote equity in student success. Use this framework to compare existing campus data to your students' experiences and ensure an equitable learning environment for students involved in the justice system.
- Regularly assess program outcomes. Use this framework throughout the administration of your program, including pre- and post-semester or quarter completion.
- Partner with institutional research (IR) offices on campus. To capture the data needed, partner with the institutional research (IR) office or office of the registrar on campus to establish protocols that align with main campus practices. This will ensure that data is captured in an equitable and comparable way for all students enrolled at the institution.
- Adapt the framework for the ever-changing landscape of HEP. The KPI framework, categories, and data sources all can be adapted 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.

### 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 re-examining 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>

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



### Student Success

You are most likely already collecting the information necessary to calculate these metrics, including data on credit completion, graduation, demographics, recidivism, and employment following release. These metrics can be supplemented with your students' personal stories of success and data from the Department of Corrections and the Bureau of Justice Statistics for your region or state.



### Civic Engagement

You share the vision of your college and university to educate students to be global citizens on campus and beyond, and you know that justice-involved students are already engaged in their communities. These metrics help you assess their level of engagement. Focus groups and interviews with students and alumni will elicit responses about students' involvement with greater society, along with their engagement with civic problems facing our nation today. These metrics can showcase how your students contribute to improvements within the facility and beyond.



### Academic Quality

You know that students inside should receive the same quality of instruction as their main campus peers. To ensure quality is consistent, these metrics measure the credentials and experiences of the faculty, including those teaching inside, the syllabi and materials for each course, the rigor of assignments and grading policies, and learning outcomes.

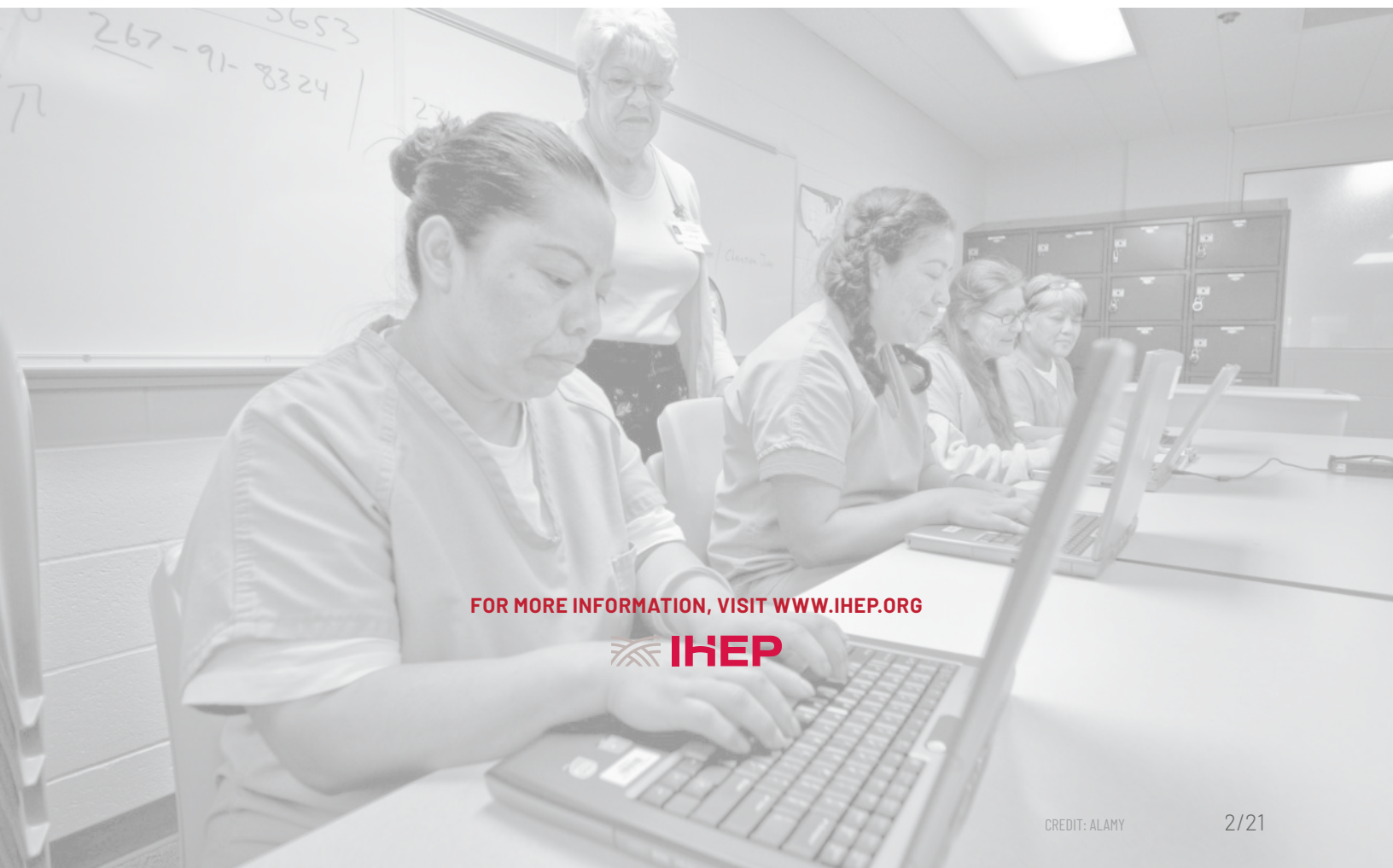


### Soft Skill Development

You recognize how much employers and institutions value soft skills and want to measure their development. Metrics in this category do that by including questions around time management, hope, and open-mindedness – all key soft skills for personal and professional development, both inside and upon returning home.

## CITATIONS

- 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. Hoffman, M., Richmond, J., Morrow, J., & Salomone, K. (2016). Investigating "Sense of Belonging" in first-year college students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 4(3), 227-256.
- iv. Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). (2009). *Critical thinking VALUE rubric*. <https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/inquiry-analysis>
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- vi. Vallerand, R.J., Blais, M.R., Brière, N.M., & Pelletier, L.G. (1989). Construction and validation of academic motivation in education (EME). *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 21, 323-349.
- vii. Moely, B., Mercer, S., Ilustre, V., Miron, D., & McFarland, M. (2002). Psychometric properties and correlates of the civic attitudes and skills questionnaire: a measure of students' attitudes related to service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 8(2).
- viii. Snyder, C. R. (1994). *The psychology of hope: You can get there from here*. Free Press.
- ix. Goldberg, L. R., Johnson, J. A., Eber, H. W., Hogan, R., Ashton, M. C., Cloninger, C. R., & Gough, H. C. (2006). The International Personality Item Pool and the future of public-domain personality measures. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40, 84-96.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.IHEP.ORG](http://WWW.IHEP.ORG)





# 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?**

KPI	Definition	Potential Data Source (e.g., Sample Measure)
Enrollment	Twelve-month headcount that includes all undergraduate students who enroll at any point during the calendar year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP enrollment reports</li> <li>• HEP class rosters</li> </ul> *Required reporting for SCP
Credit Completion	The number of credits completed within a program by an individual student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP end of semester enrollment reports</li> <li>• HEP student transcripts</li> </ul> *Required reporting for SCP
Credits Attempted	The number of credits attempted within a program by an individual student, including all credits, even those that were not completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison of enrollment reports from beginning and end of semester</li> <li>• HEP student transcripts</li> </ul> *Required reporting for SCP
Retention Rate	The percentage of students in a cohort who are enrolled in the subsequent semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP enrollment reports between semesters</li> </ul>
Corrections Transfer Rate	The percentage of students who transfer from one correctional institution to another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer reports from DOC</li> </ul> *If individualized reports are not available, your facility should have an average transfer rate to provide context for these outcomes
Institutional Transfer Rate	The percentage of students who transfer from one higher education institution to another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data from the Office of the Registrar at each institution that offers HEP at the facility</li> </ul>
Graduation Rate	The percentage of students in a cohort who earn the credential sought at their initial institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP enrollment reports</li> <li>• HEP student transcripts</li> </ul> *Required reporting for SCP
Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)	The average value of the accumulated final grades earned in courses throughout a student's enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP student transcripts</li> </ul>
Completers	The number of students who complete a credential in a given academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP enrollment reports</li> <li>• HEP student transcripts</li> </ul> *Required reporting for SCP
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOC Information</li> <li>• Bureau of Justice Statistics by state</li> </ul> *Be sure to define it using the same language as your facility using the BJS statistics from the total state population. This could be reincarceration within 3 years, 5 years, or ever.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Department of Workforce Development</li> <li>• HEP program administered interviews with recently released alumni</li> </ul> *If there is a partnership between workforce development and corrections, the Department of Workforce Development or its equivalent will have this data
Institutional Employment Rate	The percentage of former students with any reported earnings at one, five, and ten years after exit from the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Department of Workforce Development</li> <li>• Alumni reports from Office of Alumni Affairs or Office of Career Services</li> </ul> *Data sharing agreements between the institution and state workforce agency, usually run through the state system office, would be a better option, if available.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with alumni</li> </ul>
Institutional Income	The annual earnings of former students one, five, and ten years after exit from the institution (excludes zeros)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Department of Workforce Development</li> <li>• Alumni reports from Office of Alumni Affairs or Office of Career Services</li> </ul> *Data sharing agreements between the institution and state workforce agency, usually run through the state system office, would be a better option, if available.
Economic Status	Pell Grant receipt as proxy for low-income or economic status; Only for SCP sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data from FSA or Office of the Registrar</li> </ul> *Required reporting for SCP
Prison Security Level	Federal designation of institutional level of security (e.g., minimum, low, medium, high, administrative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOC Information</li> </ul>
Sentence Length	Length of incarceration based on judicial sentencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOC Information</li> </ul>
Time Served	Amount of time in months that a student has already been incarcerated for their current sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOC Information</li> </ul>

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Remaining Sentence	Amount of time remaining in months on a student's sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOC Information</li> <li>*(e.g., Earliest Possible Release Date for each student.)</li> </ul>
Tickets/ Disciplinary History	<i>Number and description of disciplinary infractions on student record</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>DOC Information</i></li> <li>• <i>HEP program administered survey or interviews with correctional administrators</i></li> <li>• <i>*This information may be challenging to obtain. Work with your internal facility contact to see what type of information is available regarding disciplinary practice for students.</i></li> </ul>
Prior College Experience	The past postsecondary history of enrolled students (e.g., some college, no degree; associate degree; bachelor's degree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP student application information</li> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students</li> <li>• <i>*This could also be collected as self-identified information in entrance survey. Students with prior college experience may also be found in the National Student Clearinghouse but will need to be matched individually.</i></li> </ul>

## 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?

KPI	Definition	Potential Data Source (e.g., Sample Measure)
Student Engagement	The degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students or alumni</li> <li>• Adapted from Sense of Belonging Scale (SBS)<sup>iii</sup></li> <li>*(e.g., How comfortable do you feel comfortable volunteering ideas or opinions in class? or Would you ask questions if you do not understand something?)</li> </ul>
Grading Methods	The method and rubrics used to assess students in their assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison of course syllabi between HEP and main-campus</li> </ul>
Faculty Qualifications	The qualifications held by faculty members teaching courses including academic discipline, degree attainment, and teaching experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CVs of faculty</li> <li>• Comparison of course syllabi between HEP and main-campus</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course evaluations</li> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students or alumni</li> <li>*(e.g., How much time did you spend on each assignment?)</li> </ul>
Course Materials	The textbooks, media, or other instructional tools being utilized for classroom instruction and used for or in conjunction with a course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison of course syllabi between HEP and main-campus.</li> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with faculty</li> <li>*(e.g., Where the same materials required for HEP courses as main campus? Where these materials available?)</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment evaluations</li> <li>• AAC&amp;U's Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric<sup>iv</sup></li> <li>• Adapted from the Actively Open-Minded Thinking Scale<sup>v</sup></li> <li>*(e.g., Do you believe that you should search actively for reasons why you might be right or wrong?)</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparison of course syllabi between HEP and main-campus.</li> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with faculty</li> <li>*(e.g., Were there the same learning outcomes for HEP courses as main campus?)</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted from the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS-C)<sup>vi</sup></li> <li>*(e.g., What are the reasons you chose for pursuing school? Do you go to college for the pleasure you experience when you discover new things?)</li> </ul>

Many of these metrics are already being collected by your local Department of Corrections, Department of Workforce Development, or the Office of the Registrar or Career Services Department on your main campus. As a best practice, justice-involved students should be included in your institution's student information system (SIS), and the system should code students participating in HEP as a cohort, group, or other indicator to make data analysis possible.

**GRAY**

Likely Accessible or Already Being Collected

**TEAL**

May Need Additional Partners or Metrics to Collect

*italics*

This information may be challenging to obtain and likely will require strong relationships and conversations between partners



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

How can we measure HEP students' own understanding of **civic engagement** (e.g., civic action, interpersonal and problemsolving skills, diversity attitudes) formed through their involvement in HEP programs?

KPI	Definition	Potential Data Source (e.g., Sample Measure)
Civic Action	Students' intentions to become involved in future community service or civic engagement, focusing on participation and memberships in communities and community organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students</li> <li>• Adapted from the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)<sup>vi</sup></li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., How likely are you to become involved with your community? How are you involved within your community now? Describe your involvement in an organization or group.)</i></p>
Interpersonal & Problem-Solving Skills	Students' ability to listen, work cooperatively, communicate, take the role of the other, think logically and analytically, and solve problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students</li> <li>• Adapted from the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)</li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., How well do you work cooperatively with a group of people?)</i></p>
Diversity Attitudes	Students' attitudes toward diversity and interest in relating to culturally different people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students</li> <li>• Adapted from the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)</li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., How much do you enjoy meeting people who come from backgrounds very different than your own?)</i></p>
Political Awareness	Students' extent to which they pay attention to politics and understand what they encounter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students</b></li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., How aware are you of political or social issues? What political issues do you care about?)</i></p> <p><i>*This information may be challenging to obtain. Work with your internal facility contact to see the facility's comfort level with questions around politics and political activity.</i></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students</li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., What is your role as a leader? What does leadership mean to you? Who has been a leader in your life?)</i></p>



# SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT

How can we measure **soft skills** (e.g., adaptability, empathy, trust, creativity, openmindedness) developed among incarcerated students and HEP alumni?

KPI	Definition	Potential Data Source (e.g., Sample Measure)
Hope	Students' understanding of the positive feeling that something desired can be had or will happen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult Hope Scale<sup>viii</sup></li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., Even when others get discouraged, do you know you can find a way to solve the problem?)</i></p>
Adaptability	Students' ability to embrace challenges, try new things, and learn quickly in changing situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)<sup>x</sup></li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., How easily do you adapt to new situations?)</i></p>
Empathy	Students' understanding of the feelings of others and the utilization of multiple perspectives to make decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)</li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., How well do you anticipate the needs of others?)</i></p>
Trust	Students' willingness to believe in others and be transparent about their actions and beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)</li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., Do you believe what other people say? How do you know what information or people to trust?)</i></p>
Creativity	Students' ability to find new and inventive ways to solve problems and explore the unexplored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)</li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., Do you like to solve complex problems?)</i></p>
Open-Mindedness	Students' openness to other people's ideas and experiences, while also considering alternatives to everyday problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)</li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., Do you try to identify the reasons for your actions? How open are you to other people's ideas?)</i></p>
Time Management	Students' ability to prioritize responsibilities and use their time productively across school, work, and personal time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students</li> </ul> <p><i>*(e.g., How do you balance all your responsibilities?)</i></p>

## JUSTICE-INVOLVED

The term "justice-involved" is the human-centered language that refers to a person who has interacted with the justice system. In the context of higher education in prison, 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.