



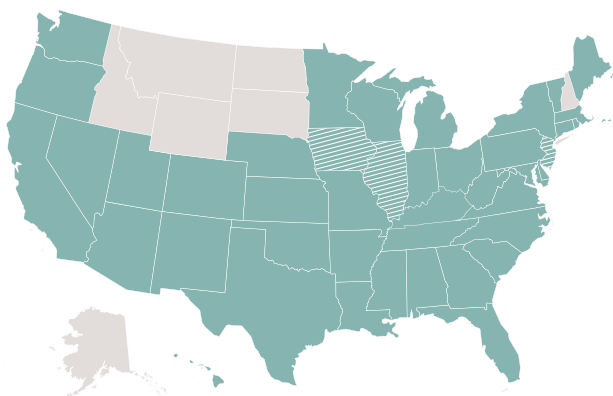
CREDIT: PETER RINGENBERG

# SUPPORTING SUCCESS: HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON (HEP)

## STATE LEVEL

### 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>



■ Home to at least one confirmed or invited SCP site

■ SCP site included in HEP KPI research

By successfully scaling quality higher education in prison (HEP), state policymakers can: improve outcomes for individuals, families, and communities; disrupt inequities in postsecondary attainment, workforce participation, and incarceration; strengthen state economies; and more effectively target scarce state resources.

To best support Higher Education in Prison, state policymakers should:

- **Include all higher education students in higher education data.** Add students who are currently incarcerated as “enrolled college students” in any statewide data system. States should code enrollment during incarceration to allow decision makers to assess outcomes for incarcerated students and the impact of policies designed to serve them, while also assisting in understanding the longitudinal impact of HEP.
- **Include all relevant partners in collaborative projects.** Share anonymized data and initiatives across corrections, colleges or universities, and the state workforce agency. Information gleaned through evidence-driven, cross-agency collaboration can highlight the successes of HEP, identify areas for improvement, and build the partnerships needed to strengthen HEP programs.
- **Invest in HEP programs.** Reallocate correctional or educational funding or explore new dedicated funding streams at the state-level to support high-quality HEP programs.
- **Invest in students.** Remove barriers to state need-based financial aid for students participating in HEP programs.

**“State employment rates of formerly incarcerated adults increase by nearly 10 percent, on average, after they participate in a college program.”<sup>iii</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.

**"We have a moral responsibility to think differently...with a shortage of skills, this [college in prison] is an amazing opportunity to get people back on track and address workforce needs."**

**Kim Reynolds**  
Governor of Iowa<sup>iv</sup>

CREDIT: ALAMY

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. Vera Institute of Justice & Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality. (2019). *Investing in futures: Economic and fiscal benefits of postsecondary education in prison*. <https://www.vera.org/publications/investing-in-futures-education-in-prison>

iv. Decious, E. (2019, December 13). *Second chances*. The Messenger. <https://www.messengernews.net/news/local-news/2019/12/second-chances-2/>