



National Center
for **Youth Law**

Higher Education for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Youths

June 1, 2022

Personal Experiences

- County Juvenile Hall
 - Limited school space; Education packets; GED, diploma; No college or vocational.
- California Youth Authority (Fred C. Nelles, under age 18)
 - HS campus; Core curriculum; GED, Diploma, CHSPEE; Vocational; No college.
- Community College
 - College campus; Remedial, certificate, transfer; Relevant, supportive services; Personal, academic, career counseling.
- Division of Juvenile Justice (Youth Training School, age 18+)
 - HS/College campus; Core curriculum; GED, diploma; Vocational; Partnership with 4-year university for AA/AS.

College in California Correctional Facilities

[Senate Bill 1391](#) (2014) enabled the California Community Colleges to offer and be reimbursed for face-to-face college courses inside correctional facilities.

Most people incarcerated in a state or federal prison are not eligible for federal Pell Grants; however, the [California College Promise Grant](#) covers community college tuition for low-income California residents, including incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students.

In 2014, only one CDCR prison offered face-to-face college courses to incarcerated people. By 2017, 34 of 35 CDCR prisons offered in-person courses.

CA's Public Colleges and Universities Self-Reported Higher Education Programs for Incarcerated Students

Program Type	California Community Colleges <i>32 Respondents</i>	California State University <i>4 Respondents</i>	University of California <i>1 Respondent</i>
Face to Face	23	1	
Correspondence	2		
Combination of face to face and correspondence	12		
Support services	30	4	1
Transitional support	4	1	1

Note: Programs could be in state and federal prisons, local adult jails, DJJ and local youth facilities.
Source: Campaign for College Opportunity Survey, 2020.

2020 Student and College Graduate Population in California State Prisons

	State Prison Population	State Incarcerated Student Population	State Incarcerated College Graduates
Total	127,709	11,472	1,214
Male	95.5%	95%	91%
Female	4.5%	5%	9%
Black	28%	28%	27%
Latinx	44%	38%	27%
White	21%	26%	33%

Source: Choate, B., DRP-CDCR., Director (E-mail communication, June 08, 2020).

Barriers to Success in Prison Education

- No established college program.
- Not enough students / potential students need to complete their GED or high school diploma before they can begin a postsecondary education program.
- Limited / insufficient course offerings and instructors.
- Limited / inadequate school and classroom facilities.
- Limited / no access to computers, internet and technology.
- Prohibitions against schools supplies in cells and/or facility.
- Corrections and probation systems do not prioritize higher education / present barriers to achieving educational goals.
- Limited / inadequate academic and career counseling, guidance, and support.
- No / limited support through reentry transition.

Barriers to Success Upon Reentry

- Feeling lost on campus / navigating new environment and complex system.
- Fearing stigmatization / alienation.
- Difficulty accessing housing / housing instability.
- Securing employment / balancing employment with college work.
- Lack of (access to) adequate and appropriate student supports and services.
- Lack of knowledgeable and experienced counselors and advisors.
- Parole / probation systems do not prioritize higher education and often present barriers to achieving educational goals.

Recommendations Program Development

- Develop and maintain strong relationships with colleges / external partners
- Leverage a range of available funding sources to support the program
- Staff college program with director / coordinator who has personal experience
- Offer a range of student supports for academic and non-academic needs
- Foster peer mentors, structured peer support opportunities for students to connect with and support each other
- Help students apply and matriculate
- Provide students with computers, textbooks, supplies, access to technology
- Celebrate success, amplify the positive experiences of student participants
- Inform of academic and career barriers, without discouraging / deterring

Research and Publications

- [The Possibility Report: From Prison to College Degrees in California](#). The Campaign for College Opportunity, February 2021.
- [Striving for Success: The Academic Achievements of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Students in California Community Colleges](#). Corrections to College California, January 2020.
- [Toolkit: Fostering Success for Formerly Incarcerated Students on Campus](#). Corrections to College California, 2017.
- [From Incarceration to College Graduation: How Colleges Can Support the Education Goals of Formerly Incarcerated Students](#). Education Insights Center, *website last accessed June 1, 2022*.

Resources for Incarcerated & Formerly Incarcerated Students In Higher Education

- [Rising Scholars Network](#) (California Community Colleges)
- [Project Rebound](#) (California State University)
- [Underground Scholars](#) (University of California)
- [California System-Involved Bar Association](#) (Law School, State Bar)

Thank You.

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The logo consists of two white circular arcs, one above and one below the text, forming a partial circle around the words "National Center" and "Youth Law".

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