

Postsecondary education has been proven to reduce recidivism and promote more successful transitions back into communities for adults returning from incarceration.¹ However, currently incarcerated and reentering adults often face barriers to receiving high-quality postsecondary education. The Council of State Governments Justice Center, with support from Lumina Foundation, conducted an intensive 50-state scan and survey of the statutory, financial, and administrative policies and practices that impact the provision of postsecondary education for this population. This fact sheet outlines the research findings for Colorado.



HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

Correctional Agency Funding

- ➔ The Colorado legislature may appropriate state funds for postsecondary education in state correctional facilities.² Postsecondary education is funded through federal sources—such as Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act³—self-pay, and private sources.⁴
- ➔ Colorado is not using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds for postsecondary education and did not apply for/receive Second Chance Pell pilot funding.⁵

State Financial Aid

- ➔ The Colorado Student Grant offered by the Colorado Department of Higher Education and Colorado's State-Funded Student Financial Aid policy does not mention past criminal conviction history in their eligibility requirements or applications. However, in practice, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education uses the federal Pell Grant requirements to determine eligibility; therefore, people who are incarcerated are ineligible for the awards.⁶



WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- ➔ Adams State University Prison College Program and Colorado Correctional Industries provide career and technical education in computer-aided design, cosmetology, HVAC, IT essentials, machining, print technology, and welding, as well as programs leading to A+ certification, Cisco certification, Clean Management Institute certification, ServSafe certification, and a National Center for Construction Education and Research certification.⁷

Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- ➔ Associate degrees and bachelor's degrees are offered through Adams State University's Correspondence Education Program.⁸

Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

- ➔ Colorado has identified local labor market trends and employer feedback as the primary factors that determine the types of postsecondary education and CTE programming that are offered within the correctional facility.⁹



WHAT RESTRICTIONS OR BARRIERS ARE IMPOSED ON ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION?

Statutory or Administrative Requirements, Permissions, and Restrictions

- ➔ Participation in postsecondary education programs is based on length of sentencing. For example, individuals who will be released in five years are prioritized for placement in educational programming.¹⁰
- ➔ If withdrawn from an education program for disciplinary reasons, a participant will be eligible to reenroll within six months after their withdrawal.¹¹

Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

- ➔ Colorado’s legislature recently passed a bill prohibiting institutions of higher education from asking about an applicant’s disciplinary or criminal history except in the following circumstances: convictions or disciplinary history for stalking, sexual assault, and domestic violence; convictions within the last five years for assault, kidnapping, voluntary manslaughter, or murder; and any pending criminal charges. The bill takes effect in May 2020.¹²
- ➔ Colorado has 14 state universities, 4 of which used the 2019–2020 Common Application.¹³ All of the schools added questions asking applicants to disclose their criminal history: Colorado State University, University of Colorado Boulder, University of Northern Colorado, and Western State Colorado University.
- ➔ Seven of the 10 state colleges and universities that do not use the Common Application require students to disclose their criminal history: Adams State University, Colorado Mesa University, Colorado School of Mines, Colorado State University-Pueblo, Fort Lewis College, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, and University of Colorado-Denver.



WHAT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS EXIST TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION?

Statutory or Administrative Benefits

- ➔ Individuals can be awarded earned time to reduce their sentence by attending postsecondary education programs.¹⁴
- ➔ Incentives for participating in postsecondary education programs include dedicated or specialized housing, compensation, and access to technology for personal use.¹⁵

Postsecondary Education as a Factor in Parole Decisions

- ➔ The board is permitted to consider postsecondary educational information when deciding whether to grant or deny parole.¹⁶ Statute also states that the board must review the individual’s parole plan,¹⁷ which, according to regulations, may include “employment and/or education.”¹⁸

Parole Conditions Related to Postsecondary Education

- ➔ State statute permits the board to make attendance at a postsecondary institution a condition of parole, but, if the board establishes such a condition, it is required to first notify the postsecondary educational institution the person plans to attend upon release.¹⁹

Support and Services in the Community

- ➔ The parole-granting agency provides occupational training, information on postsecondary education, and vocational credential testing but does not provide postsecondary education advisors and coordinators.²⁰

Parole Conditions Related to Postsecondary Education

- ➔ Colorado Department of Corrections does not have formalized articulation agreements with schools offering programming in correctional facilities to ensure that courses offered in correctional facilities are equivalent to those offered in the community and that credits fully transfer.²¹

1. Lois M. Davis et al., *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html.
2. C.R.S. 17-32-105(1)(g).
3. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
4. C.R.S. 17-32-105(1)(g).
5. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
6. *Guidelines for Administering State-Funded Student Assistance Programs 2017-2018*, (Colorado: Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2018), 6, <https://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Finance/FinancialAid/Policy/State-Funded-Student-Assistance-Programs-Guidelines-FY1718.pdf>; Lauren Hobby, Brian Walsh, and Ruth Delaney, *A Piece of the Puzzle: State Financial Aid for Incarcerated Students—Technical Appendix* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2019), 9.
7. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
8. "Print-based (Prison College Program)," Adams State University, accessed November 25, 2019, <https://www.adams.edu/academics/print-based/>; See also "Prison College Program FAQs," <https://www.adams.edu/academics/print-based/faqs/>; "Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) Degrees," Adams State University Colorado, accessed June 20, 2019, <https://www.adams.edu/academics/print-based/associate-degree/>; "Bachelor's Degrees," Adams State University Colorado, accessed June 20, 2019, <https://www.adams.edu/academics/print-based/bachelors-degrees/>.
9. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
10. "AR Form 500-01," in Academic/Career and Technical Education, Colorado Department of Corrections, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8bgSyXgeic3UWx4OXpMRUZHaeE/view>.
11. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
12. S.B. 19-170, 2019 Reg. Sess. (Col. 2019).
13. The Common Application, an undergraduate college application system, recently removed its required criminal history question, but maintains its questions on disciplinary infractions. However, colleges on the Common Application can add questions regarding criminal conviction or disciplinary information to their individualized applications.
14. C.R.S. 17-22.5-302(1.5); C.R.S. 17-22.5-405; C.R.S. 18-1.3-301(1)(i).
15. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
16. C.R.S. 17-22.5-404 (4)(a)(IV).
17. *Ibid.*, (4)(a)(VI).
18. 8 CCR 1511-1(5.03)(J).
19. C.R.S. 17-2-201(5)(d).
20. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
21. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.