

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 Florida.



HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

Correctional Agency Funding

- The Florida legislature may appropriate state funds for career and technical education in state correctional facilities; however, state funds for the operation of postsecondary workforce programs may not be appropriated unless they are specifically for that purpose in the 2019-2020 General Appropriations Act.² Further, these funds may not be used for people who are incarcerated with more than 24 months left in their sentence unless the funds are specifically appropriated for such purpose.³ Postsecondary education is funded through federal sources—such as the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and the Second Chance Pell pilot program⁴—self-pay,⁵ and private sources.⁶
- Florida is not using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds for postsecondary education.⁷

State Financial Aid

- The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship requires applicants to have no criminal convictions; therefore, both currently and formerly incarcerated individuals are ineligible for the grant.⁸ The Florida Public Student Assistance Grant uses federal Pell Grant requirements to determine eligibility; therefore, one's incarceration status may make them ineligible.⁹



WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- In partnership with the Florida Department of Corrections, Smart Horizons Career Online Education provides career and technical education in barbering, brick and block masonry, building construction technology, business computer programming, cabinetmaking, carpentry, commercial vehicle driving, cosmetology, digital design, electricity, environmental services, graphic communication and printing technology, HVAC/R, landscape and turf management, marine service technology, nursery management, plumbing, technology support services, wastewater treatment technologies, web development, and welding technology, as well as programs leading to a Post-Secondary Adult Vocational certification in drafting.¹⁰

Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- ➔ Individuals may participate in postsecondary correspondence courses geared toward acquiring college credit at the student's own expense.¹¹
- ➔ Associate degrees and college courses are offered through the Second Chance Pell Pilot site with Florida Gateway College.¹²
- ➔ Bachelor's degrees are offered through the Second Chance Pell Pilot site at Ashland University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, private institutions.¹³
- ➔ College courses are offered through Stetson University's (a private institution) Community Education Project¹⁴ and University of Central Florida's Florida Prison Education Project.¹⁵

Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

- ➔ Florida 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.¹⁶



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 custody level, behavior during incarceration, length of sentence, and type of offense.¹⁷ For example, individuals convicted of crimes using a computer are prohibited from computer courses.¹⁸
- ➔ If withdrawn from an education program for disciplinary reasons, a participant will be eligible to reenroll within six months after the withdrawal.¹⁹

Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

- ➔ Florida has 35²⁰ state colleges and universities, 8 of which used the 2019-2020 Common Application.²¹ Seven of these schools added questions asking applicants to disclose their criminal history: Florida Atlantic University, Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida State University, New College of Florida, University of Central Florida, University of North Florida, and University of West Florida.
- ➔ Fourteen of the 27 state colleges and universities that do not use the Common Application require students to disclose their criminal history: Broward College; Chipola College; College of Central Florida; Eastern Florida State College; Florida A&M University; Florida International University; Florida Southwestern State College; Florida State College at Jacksonville; Polk State College; South Florida State College; State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota; University of Florida, which used the application portal called MyCoalition; University of South Florida; and Valencia College.
- ➔ Many of the applications reviewed asked applicants who were unsure if they needed to disclose their criminal history to answer "yes" and disclose all incidents to avoid disciplinary action or revocation of admission. The application questions varied extensively; for example, Florida State University had additional questions related to charges that resulted in community service and/or the suspension of one's driver's license, including traffic violations with a \$200 fine. Florida State College at Jacksonville completely restricts individuals designated as a "sexual predator" from applying.



WHAT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS EXIST TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION?

Statutory or Administrative Benefits

- ➔ Individuals can earn “gain time”²² of up to 60 days to reduce their sentence by attending postsecondary education programs.²³
- ➔ Incentives for participating in postsecondary education programs include dedicated or specialized housing, exemption from work requirements, and access to technology for personal use.²⁴

Postsecondary Education as a Factor in Parole Decisions

- ➔ In Florida, all individuals whose crimes were committed on or after October 1, 1983 are ineligible for parole consideration.²⁵ Additionally, those sentenced for certain violent crimes are subject to mandatory supervision after their release—called conditional release.²⁶
- ➔ State law permits the parole board to consider participation in postsecondary educational activities during incarceration when deciding whether to grant or deny parole.²⁷

Support and Services in the Community

- ➔ The parole-granting agency does not provide occupational training, information on postsecondary education, postsecondary education advisors and coordinators, and vocational credential testing.²⁸

Coursework Transfer Policies

- ➔ Florida Department of Corrections has articulation agreements with schools offering programming in correctional facilities, which includes a statement that courses and degree programs offered in the correctional facilities are equivalent to those offered in the community and notes what credits can be transferred.²⁹

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. Fla. Stat. § 1011.80(7)(b).
3. Fla. Stat. § 1011.80(8)(b).
4. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019; "12,000 Incarcerated Students to Enroll in Postsecondary Educational and Training Programs through Education Department's New Second Chance Pell Pilot Program," news release, June 24, 2016, <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/12000-incarcerated-students-enroll-postsecondary-educational-and-training-programs-through-education-departments-new-second-chance-pell-pilot-program>.
5. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
6. "Join the Team," Stetson University, accessed December 5, 2019, <https://www.stetson.edu/other/cep/get-involved.php>; "Donate," Florida Prison Education Project, accessed December 5, 2019, <https://cah.ucf.edu/fpep/donate/>.
7. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
8. FLA. STAT. § 1009.531(e)(2018).
9. FLA. STAT. § 1009.50 (2)(b)(2018).
10. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
11. *Ibid.*
12. U.S. Department of Education, "12,000 Incarcerated Students to Enroll in Postsecondary Educational and Training Programs through Education Department's New Second Chance Pell Pilot Program," news release, June 24, 2016, <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/12000-incarcerated-students-enroll-postsecondary-educational-and-training-programs-through-education-departments-new-second-chance-pell-pilot-program>; "College in Prison," Vera Institute of Justice, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://www.vera.org/projects/college-in-prison>.
13. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
14. "About CEP," Stetson University, accessed May 10, 2019, <https://www.stetson.edu/other/cep/>.
15. "Mission," University of Central Florida, accessed December 1, 2019, <https://cah.ucf.edu/fpep/mission/>.
16. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. As of August 2019, Santa Fe College application cannot be accessed.
21. 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.
22. Fla. Stat. § 944.275(4)(d); Fla. Stat. § 944.801(3)(i)(5) and (3)(j).
23. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
24. *Ibid.*
25. "Release Types," Florida Commission on Offender Review, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://www.fcor.state.fl.us/release-types.shtml>.
26. Fla. Stat. § 947.1405.
27. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
28. *Ibid.*
29. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.