

**P**ostsecondary education has been proven to reduce recidivism and promote more successful transitions back into communities for adults returning from incarceration.<sup>1</sup> 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 Illinois.



### HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

#### Correctional Agency Funding

- The Illinois legislature may appropriate state funds for postsecondary education, as evidenced by a contractual line item in the state's budget specifically for the degrees provided by the correctional facilities and community colleges.<sup>2</sup> Postsecondary education is funded through federal sources—such as the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act—and private sources.<sup>3</sup>
- Illinois did not apply for/receive Second Chance Pell pilot funding.<sup>4</sup>

#### State Financial Aid

- Illinois's postsecondary education programs that serve people who are incarcerated are not eligible to receive funding provided under the Higher Education Student Assistance Act; therefore, the relevant financial aid programs restrict incarcerated students. However, statutory language differs for the Illinois Veteran grant and Illinois National Guard grant, which are available for incarcerated students who meet other qualifications.<sup>5</sup>



### WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

#### Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- The Illinois Department of Corrections provides career and technical education in programs leading to a ServSafe certification.<sup>6</sup>

#### Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- Associate degrees are offered through community colleges.<sup>7</sup>
- Bachelor's degrees are offered through Northeastern Illinois University and Northwestern University, a private institution.<sup>8</sup>



### WHAT RESTRICTIONS OR BARRIERS ARE IMPOSED ON ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION?

#### Statutory or Administrative Requirements, Permissions, and Restrictions

- If withdrawn from an education program for disciplinary reasons, a participant will be eligible to reenroll within six months after their withdrawal.<sup>9</sup>

## Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

- ➔ Illinois has 12 state universities, 2 of which used the 2019–2020 Common Application.<sup>10</sup> Only Chicago State University requires applicants to disclose their criminal history. University of Illinois (U of I) at Chicago provides a disclaimer that the university does not ask about criminal conviction history until admission has been granted.
- ➔ Eight of the 10 state colleges and universities that do not use the Common Application require students to disclose their criminal conviction history: Eastern Illinois University, Governors State University, Illinois State University, Northern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, U of I at Springfield, and Western Illinois University. U of I at Urbana-Champaign requires a disclosure upon admission and acceptance of the offer.



## WHAT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS EXIST TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION?

### Statutory or Administrative Benefits

- ➔ Individuals can receive “sentence credits” to reduce their sentence by attending postsecondary education programs.<sup>11</sup> Students receive .5 days of credit for each instructional day they attend; however, individuals with certain convictions may not be eligible.<sup>12</sup>
- ➔ Incentives for participating in postsecondary education programs include compensation and the sealing of an individual’s records.<sup>13</sup>

### Postsecondary Education as a Factor in Parole Decisions

- ➔ State law permits the board to consider participation in or completion of postsecondary education programs during incarceration as a factor when granting or denying parole.<sup>14</sup>

### Parole Conditions Related to Postsecondary Education

- ➔ The parole board may require participation in career and technical education programs as a condition of parole.<sup>15</sup>

### Support and Services in the Community

- ➔ The parole-granting agency provides occupational training, information on postsecondary education, postsecondary education advisors and coordinators, and vocational credential testing.<sup>16</sup>

### Coursework Transfer Policies

- ➔ Illinois Department of Corrections does not have 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.<sup>17</sup>

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](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html).
2. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
3. Ibid.
4. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
5. 110 Ill. Comp. Stat. 947/10 (4); Illinois Monetary award program 110 Ill Comp. Stat. 947/35; Merit Recognition Scholarship program 110 Ill. Comp. Stat. 947/31; Illinois Veteran grant program Ill. Comp. Stat. 947/40(a)(1)(C).
6. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
7. "Adult Education & Vocational Services," Illinois Department of Corrections, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/programs/Pages/AdultEducationVocationalServices.aspx>; The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
8. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
9. Ibid.
10. 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.
11. 730 ILCS 5/3-6-3(a)(4).
12. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
13. Sealing; 20 ILCS 2630/5.2(c)(3)(E); The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
14. 20 Ill. Adm. Code 1610.50(b)(3), (4).
15. 730 ILCS 5/3-3-7(b)(1).
16. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
17. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.