

MASSACHUSETTS

Access to Continued Education for People in the Criminal Justice System

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 Massachusetts.



HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

Correctional Agency Funding

- The Massachusetts legislature may appropriate state funds for college programs in state correctional facilities.² Postsecondary education is funded through federal sources, such as Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act³ and the Second Chance Pell pilot program.⁴
- Massachusetts is not using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds for postsecondary education.⁵

State Financial Aid

- Massachusetts financial aid programs do not have any statutory restrictions that prevent people who are currently incarcerated from receiving aid. However, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Attestation Guide creates policy barriers that may institute restrictions through their compliance requirements. These requirements analyze an applicant's eligibility to receive a Pell Grant and/or other Federal Title IV aid, drug convictions, and incarceration status. However, the direct use of these compliance requirements, and how they impact incarcerated students and/or individuals with criminal records, remains ambiguous due to lack of transparency from the Board of Higher Education.⁶



WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- The Massachusetts Department of Correction provides occupational training in barbering, building trades, cosmetology, culinary arts, and welding; as well as programs leading to an Automotive Service Excellence certification, National Center for Construction Education and Research certification, Occupational Safety and Health Administration certification, and ServSafe certification.⁷
- Certificates are provided through the federally funded Second Chance Pell Pilot program site at Mount Wachusett Community College.⁸

Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- Associate degrees are offered through Tufts University, a private institution, and Bunker Hill Community College's partnership.⁹
- Bachelor's degrees are offered through Boston College, Emerson College, and Boston University—private institutions.¹⁰



Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

- ➔ Massachusetts has not identified local labor market trends, employer feedback or outcome data as the primary factors that determine the types of postsecondary education and CTE programming that are offered within the correctional facility.¹¹



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 level¹² and length of sentence.¹³

Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

- ➔ Massachusetts has 13 state universities, 8 of which used the 2019-2020 Common Application.¹⁴ Seven of these schools added questions asking applicants to disclose their criminal history: Bridgewater State University, Framingham State University, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and the University of Massachusetts campuses at Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth, and Lowell.
- ➔ Three of the five state colleges and universities that do not use the Common Application require students to disclose their criminal history: Fitchburg State University, Salem University, and Westfield State University.



WHAT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS EXIST TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION?

Statutory or Administrative Benefits

- ➔ Individuals can earn “good time credits” to reduce their sentence by attending postsecondary education programs.¹⁵
- ➔ Incentives for participating in postsecondary education programs include exemption from work requirements and access to technology for personal use.¹⁶

Postsecondary Education as a Factor in Parole Decisions

- ➔ The parole board may consider participation in postsecondary education programs during incarceration when determining whether to release an individual on parole.¹⁷

Parole Conditions Related to Postsecondary Education

- ➔ The parole panel may require an individual to seek or complete postsecondary education as a special condition for parole.¹⁸
- ➔ Post-release participation in postsecondary education can meet a parole requirement to seek or obtain employment.¹⁹

Support and Services in the Community

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

Coursework Transfer Policies

➔ The Massachusetts Department of Correction is currently developing memorandum of agreements with schools offering programming in the correctional facilities, which states that courses and degree programs offered in the correctional facilities are equivalent to those offered in the community and indicates what credits can be transferred.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. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
3. Ibid.
4. 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>.
5. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
6. Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance (MASSOFSA), *Student Financial Assistance Attestation Guide* (Revere, MA: MassOFSA, 2015), 19, <https://www.mass.edu/osfa/documents/publications/2015/2015-2016%20Audit%20Guide%205th%20Edition-rev%20063015.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), 37-38.
7. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019; Massachusetts Department of Correction, *Program Description Booklet* (Milford, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Department of Correction, 2019), 14-16, https://www.mass.gov/doc/program-description-booklet-2/download?_ga=2.132102855.955604256.1549903914-1459834499.1543502241.
8. 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 May 3, 2019, <https://www.vera.org/projects/college-in-prison>.
9. "Tufts University Prison Initiative of Tisch College," Tufts, accessed May 28, 2019, <https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/tufts-university-prison-initiative-tisch-college>.
10. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 127, § 49A; 103 Mass. Code Regs. 465.07.
14. 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.
15. Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 127, § 129D; 103 Mass. Code Regs. 411.09; The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
16. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
17. Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 127, § 130B(f); The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
18. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.