

**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 Montana.



### HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

#### Correctional Agency Funding

- The Montana legislature may appropriate state funds for college programs in state correctional facilities; general and vocational education funds for programs inside the facilities are covered by the \$1.8 million general fund.<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.<sup>3</sup>
- Montana did not apply for/receive Second Chance Pell pilot funding.<sup>4</sup>

#### State Financial Aid

- The Montana STEM Scholarship restricts people who are currently incarcerated from receiving the award,<sup>5</sup> but upon release, they may apply. For other state grants, incarceration may make it difficult to meet certain eligibility factors (for instance, some of the grants require students to complete or have completed an associate degree, but the correctional facilities do not currently offer them), but there are no explicit statutory restrictions for incarcerated students.<sup>6</sup>



### WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

#### Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- The Montana Department of Corrections provides career and technical education in welding as well as programs leading to an Application Lifecycle Management certification, artificial insemination certification, Automotive Service Excellence certification, certified dairy laboratory technician, commercial driver's licensing, Microsoft Office certification, Occupational Safety and Health 10 certificate, pesticide applicators certification, and tire industry certification.<sup>7</sup>

#### Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- Montana does not provide associate and bachelor's degrees.<sup>8</sup>

#### Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

- Montana 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<sup>9</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 six months to one year after their withdrawal.<sup>10</sup>

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

- ➔ The Montana Board of Regents allows colleges and universities to deny or place conditions on admission to any person who “presents an unreasonable risk to the safety and welfare of the campus and persons thereon.” This policy allows the institutions to take into account a person’s “violence and destructive tendencies, behavior at other educational institutions, and rehabilitative therapy.”<sup>11</sup>
- ➔ Montana has six state universities, one of which used the 2019–2020 Common Application.<sup>12</sup> This college, the University of Montana-Missoula, does not ask about criminal convictions on its application.
- ➔ Of the remaining five state colleges and universities, all of them require students to disclose their criminal and disciplinary history: Montana State University-Billings, Montana State University-Bozeman, Montana State University-Northern, University of Montana-Montana Tech, and University of Montana-Western.



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

### Postsecondary Education as a Factor in Parole Decisions

- ➔ The parole board is permitted to consider participation in postsecondary educational activities during incarceration as a factor when granting or denying parole.<sup>13</sup>

### Parole Conditions Related to Postsecondary Education

- ➔ Post-release participation in postsecondary education can meet a parole requirement to seek or obtain employment.<sup>14</sup>

### 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.<sup>15</sup>

### Coursework Transfer Policies

- ➔ Montana 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.<sup>16</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. 2019 Biennial Report Team, *Montana Department of Corrections 2019 Biennial Report*, (Helena, MT: Montana Department of Corrections, 2019), 20, <http://cor.mt.gov/Portals/104/Resources/Reports/2019BiennialReport.pdf>; The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
3. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
4. Ibid.
5. 20-26-616(2)(c), MCA; "Montana STEM Scholarship -Eligibility Criteria and Procedures," Montana University System, accessed December 20, 2019, [https://mus.edu/Prepare/Pay/MT\\_STEM\\_Scholarship-Eligibility\\_and\\_Procedures.pdf](https://mus.edu/Prepare/Pay/MT_STEM_Scholarship-Eligibility_and_Procedures.pdf).
6. Other grants include the Montana Access Scholarship, Montana Promise Grant Program, Montana University System Honor Scholarship, and the 2 Plus 2 Honor Scholarship; "Montana Access Scholarship," Montana University System, accessed December 20, 2019, <https://mus.edu/Prepare/Pay/MT-Access-Scholarship-Eligibility-and-Procedures.pdf>; Montana Promise Program, 20-26-623, MCA; "Montana University Honor Scholarship," Montana University System, accessed December 20, 2019, [https://mus.edu/prepare/pay/scholarships/mus\\_honor\\_scholarship.asp](https://mus.edu/prepare/pay/scholarships/mus_honor_scholarship.asp); "2 Plus 2 Honor Scholarship," Montana University System, accessed December 20, 2019, [https://mus.edu/Prepare/Pay/Scholarships/2\\_Plus\\_2\\_Honor\\_Scholarship.asp](https://mus.edu/Prepare/Pay/Scholarships/2_Plus_2_Honor_Scholarship.asp).
7. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. "Policy 301-Admission Requirements," in *Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education Policy and Procedures Manual*, (Helena, MT: Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education, revised January 2014), 2, accessed May 21, 2019, <https://mus.edu/borpol/bor300/301.pdf>.
12. 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.
13. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019; 46-23-208(4)(h), MCA.
14. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
15. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
16. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.