

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 New Jersey.



HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

Correctional Agency Funding

- Due to recent legislation amendments, the New Jersey legislature may appropriate state funds for college programs in state correctional facilities.² Postsecondary education is funded through federal sources, such as the Second Chance Pell pilot program, and private sources.³
- New Jersey is not using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act funds for postsecondary education.⁴

State Financial Aid

- New Jersey financial aid programs do not have any statutory, regulatory, or policy restrictions that prevent people who are currently incarcerated from receiving aid. In January 2020, the state lifted its statutory restriction that had prevented incarcerated people from accessing state financial aid, including the Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) program and the Community College Opportunity Grant (CCOG) program.⁵



WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- The New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) provides career and technical education in building trades, carpentry, culinary arts, electrical trades, and green technology.⁶

Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- Associate and bachelor's degrees are offered through the Second Chance Pell Pilot sites through Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and Raritan Valley Community College.⁷

Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

- New Jersey has identified outcome data as the primary factor that determines the types of postsecondary education and CTE programming that are offered within the correctional facility.⁸



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 behavior during incarceration.⁹
- If withdrawn for disciplinary reasons, a participant will be eligible to reenroll six months to a year after their withdrawal.¹⁰

Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

- ➔ There are 11 state universities, 8 of which used the 2019-2020 Common Application.¹¹ The College of New Jersey added questions asking applicants to disclose their criminal history, while Stockton University inquired about disciplinary background.
- ➔ One of the three state colleges and universities that does not use the Common Application—Montclair State University—requires students to disclose their criminal history.



WHAT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS EXIST TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION?

Statutory or Administrative Benefits

- ➔ Incentives for participating in postsecondary education programs include dedicated or specialized housing, exemption from work requirements, and compensation.¹²

Postsecondary Education as a Factor in Parole Decisions

- ➔ State law permits the parole board to consider participation in postsecondary educational activities during incarceration as a factor when deciding whether to grant or deny parole.¹³

Parole Conditions Related to Postsecondary Education

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

Support and Services in the Community

- ➔ The parole-granting agency does not provide information on postsecondary education, postsecondary education advisors and coordinators, occupational training, and vocational credential testing.¹⁵

Coursework Transfer Policies

- ➔ NJDOC has articulation agreements with schools offering programming in the correctional facilities, which state that courses and degree programs offered in the correctional facilities are equivalent to those offered in the community and indicate what credits can be transferred.¹⁶

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. 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>; The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.

4. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.

5. 2018 Bill Text NJ S.B. 2055.

6. State of New Jersey, *2016 Annual Report* (New Jersey: State of New Jersey Department of Corrections, 2017), 39, https://www.state.nj.us/corrections/pdf/NJDOCNewsletter/2016_Annual_Report.pdf.

7. U.S. Department of Education, “12,000 Incarcerated Students to Enroll.”

8. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.

9. N.J.A.C. 10A:4-5.1(e), (g), (i), (k), (m); The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.

10. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.

11. 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.

12. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.

13. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.