NORTH CAROLINA
Access to Continued Education for People in the Criminal Justice System

P ostsecondary 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 North Carolina.

HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

Correctional Agency Funding

➡ The North Carolina legislature may appropriate state funds for postsecondary education programs in state correctional facilities.[2] Postsecondary education is funded through the Correction Inmate Welfare Fund—the profits from prison canteens[3]—and private sources.[4]

➡ North Carolina is not using Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds for postsecondary education and did not apply for/receive Second Chance Pell pilot funding.[5]

State Financial Aid

➡ For one of the state's largest financial aid programs, as well as the Community College Grant, there is a statutory barrier for individuals who do not meet all the federal Pell Grant's eligibility requirements.[6] For the Community College Grant, the state's policy requires applicants to meet all Pell eligibility requirements.[7] Incarcerated students are unable to access either.

WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

Career and Technical Education and Certifications

➡ The North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS) provides career and technical education in automotive repair and services industry, basic electrical technician, business administrative, carpentry, catering, commercial cleaning, computer application, electrical wiring, food service technology, HVAC & refrigeration, human resource development, masonry, plumbing, and welding, as well as programs leading to a literacy certification in braille transcription operation and Universal Environmental Protection Agency certification.[8]

Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

➡ Associate degrees are offered through Campbell University and Stanley Community College.[9]

➡ In partnership with NCDPS, a bachelor's degree in pastoral ministry is offered through the College at Southeastern, a private institution.[10]

➡ Bachelor's degrees are offered through University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Correctional Education Program.[11]

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➡ College courses are offered through East Carolina University,[12] Guilford College,[13] and Vera Institute of Justice Pathways Program.[14]

Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

➡ North Carolina 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.[15]

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,[16] behavior during incarceration,[17] length of sentence,[18] and type of offense.[19]

➡ If withdrawn from an education program for disciplinary reasons, a participant will be eligible to reenroll within six months after their withdrawal.[20]

Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

➡ North Carolina has 16 state universities, 9 of which used the 2019–2020 Common Application.[21] All of these schools added questions asking applicants to disclose their criminal history.

➡ The remaining seven universities all require applicants to disclose their criminal history.

WHAT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS EXIST TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION?

Statutory or Administrative Benefits

➡ Individuals can earn "gain time credits," "earned time credit," and/or "meritorious time" to reduce their sentence by attending postsecondary education programs.[22]

➡ Dedicated or specialized housing is used as an incentive for individuals to participate in postsecondary education programs.[23]

Postsecondary Education as a Factor in Parole Decisions

➡ Parole was abolished in North Carolina in 1994.[24] North Carolina's Structured Sentencing Act applies to people sentenced for criminal offenses that occurred on or after October 1, 1994.[25] Under the Act, the sentencing court imposes a minimum and a maximum sentence.[26] Individuals are then released to post-release supervision at a statutorily mandated time, which varies based on the class of felony for which an individual is sentenced.[27] The parole commission has no role in determining when people affected by the Structured Sentencing Act are released.[28]

Support and Services in the Community

➡ The parole-granting agency provides occupational training and information on postsecondary education, but not postsecondary education advisors and coordinators and vocational credential testing.[29]

Coursework Transfer Policies

➡ NCDPS has articulation agreements with schools offering programming in their correctional facilities dictating that courses and degree programs offered in the correctional facilities are equivalent to those offered in the community and indicating what credits can be transferred.[30]

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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. N.C. Gen. Stat § 148-2; The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.

4. "The North Carolina Field Minister Program," Prison Studies Project, accessed June 25, 2019, http://prisonstudiesproject.org/2019/03/the-north-carolina-field-minister-program/.

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

6. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-499.2(2).

7. North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority, *Policies for the North Carolina Community College Grant and Loan Program and Targeted Financial Assistance* (Research Triangle Park, NC: NCSEAA, 2013), A(2)(e), http://www.ncseaa.edu/pdf/CC%20Grant%20guidance.pdf.

8. North Carolina Department of Public Safety, *Educational Services Annual Report Calendar Year 2015* (North Carolina: North Carolina Department of Public Safety, 2015), https://files.nc.gov/ncdps/documents/files/2015%20EDSvcsAnnual%20Report.pdf.

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

10. "The North Carolina Field Minister Program," Prison Studies Project, accessed June 25, 2019, http://prisonstudiesproject.org/2019/03/the-north-carolina-field-minister-program/; Email correspondence between CSG Justice Center and the North Carolina Field Minister Program, December 9, 2019.

11. "University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Friday Center for Continuing Education with North Carolina Department for Corrections," Prison Studies Project, accessed June 25, 2019, http://prisonstudiesproject.org/2011/08/university-of-north-carolina-at-chapel-hill%e2%80%99s-friday-center-for-continuing-education-with-north-carolina-department-for-corrections/.

12. North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Educational Services Annual Report Calendar Year 2015, 4-7, 26.

13. "Guilford College Higher Education in Prison Program (HEIPP)," Guilford College, accessed June 25, 2019, https://www.guilford.edu/heip.

14. North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Educational Services Annual Report Calendar Year 2015, 4, 33, 57.

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

16. "Correctional Education," The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed June 25, 2019, https://fridaycenter.unc.edu/friday-center-home/other-college-credit-programs/correctional/; "The North Carolina Field Minister Program," Prison Studies Project, accessed June 25, 2019, http://prisonstudiesproject.org/2019/03/the-north-carolina-field-minister-program/; "Academic/Vocational Education," North Carolina Department of Public Safety, accessed June 25, 2019, https://www.ncdps.gov/adult-corrections/prisons/education-services/academic-vocational; The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.

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

18. "Correctional Education," The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed June 25, 2019, https://fridaycenter.unc.edu/friday-center-home/other-college-credit-programs/correctional/; N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115D-5(c1); The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.

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

20. Ibid.

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. State of North Carolina Department of Public Safety Prisons, *Policy and Procedure*, Ch. B, Sec. 0100, https://www.doc.state.nc.us/dop/policy_procedure_manual/b0100.pdf.

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

24. "Parole Process," North Carolina Department of Public Safety, accessed November 6, 2019, https://www.ncdps.gov/about-dps/boards-commissions/post-release-supervision-parole-commission/parole-process.

25. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 15A-1340.10.

26. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 15A-1340.13(c).

27. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 15A-1368.2(a).

28. "Parole Process," North Carolina Department of Public Safety, accessed November 6, 2019, https://www.ncdps.gov/about-dps/boards-commissions/post-release-supervision-parole-commission/parole-process.

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

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