

PENNSYLVANIA

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 Pennsylvania.



HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

Correctional Agency Funding

- The Pennsylvania legislature appropriates state funds for postsecondary education programs in state correctional facilities.² Postsecondary education is also funded through the Second Chance Pell pilot program.³
- Pennsylvania is not using Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds for postsecondary education.⁴

State Financial Aid

- The largest state financial aid program, the Pennsylvania State Grant Program, has a statutory restriction that prevents individuals who are incarcerated from receiving the award.⁵ The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Authority (PHEAA) also has the discretion to consider criminal convictions and/or drug violations when awarding the State Grant, which would extend the restriction to formerly incarcerated individuals as well.⁶ Other state-based awards and programs also prohibit incarcerated people from being eligible.⁷ After incarceration, students may access these awards.



WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections provides career and technical education in automotive technology, barbering, business education, carpentry, cosmetology, construction, custodial maintenance, computer aided drafting, electricity, electronics repair, fiber optics, flagging, gas piping, green environment education, horticulture, HVAC, machinery, masonry, optical lab, print school, plumbing, restaurant trades, Wardflex, warehouse operation, and welding, as well as programs leading to an Occupational Safety and Health Administration certification.⁸
- Certificates in rehabilitative justice are provided through the federally funded Second Chance Pell Pilot program site at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.⁹

Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- Associate degrees are offered through the Second Chance Pell Pilot sites through Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Lehigh Carbon Community College, and Villanova University.¹⁰
- Bachelor's degrees are offered through the Second Chance Pell Pilot site at Villanova University.¹¹



Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

- ➔ Pennsylvania has not identified local labor market trends, employer feedback, and outcome data as the primary factors that determine the types of postsecondary education and CTE programming that are offered within the correctional facility.¹²



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,¹³ length of sentence,¹⁴ and type of offense.¹⁵
- ➔ Access to postsecondary services is prioritized based on an individual's release date; individuals within five years of their release date are prioritized for career and technical education.¹⁶
- ➔ If withdrawn from an education program for disciplinary reasons, a participant will be eligible to reenroll six months to one year after their withdrawal.¹⁷

Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

- ➔ Pennsylvania has 18 state universities, 8 of which used the 2019–2020 Common Application.¹⁸ All eight of these schools added questions asking applicants to disclose their criminal history. Pennsylvania State University provides a disclaimer on their application stating that during the 2018–2019 application cycle, 99 percent of applicants who answered “yes” to the criminal history questions and completed the review process were approved to continue the university's admission process.¹⁹
- ➔ Nine of the 10 state colleges and universities that do not use the Common Application require students to disclose their criminal history: Bloomsburg University, Cheyney University, East Stroudsburg University, Indiana University, Kutztown University, Lincoln University, Lock Haven University, Mansfield University, and Slippery Rock University.²⁰



WHAT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS EXIST TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION?

Postsecondary Education as a Factor in Parole Decisions

- ➔ The board is permitted to consider participation in postsecondary educational activities during incarceration as a factor when granting or denying parole.²¹

Support and Services in the Community

- ➔ The parole-granting agency does not provide occupational training, information on postsecondary education, postsecondary education advisors and coordinators, and vocational credential testing.²²

Coursework Transfer Policies

- ➔ Pennsylvania 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.²³

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. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Policy 7.6.1-1.C.2, <https://www.cor.pa.gov/About%20Us/Documents/DOC%20Policies/07.06.01%20Delivery%20of%20Educational%20Services.pdf>; 71 P.S. § 310-7.
3. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019; 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>.
4. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
5. 022 Pa. Code §121.6 (b); The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Authority also has the authority to restrict individuals with felony charges or in violation of The Controlled Substance, Drug, Device, and Cosmetic Act, but in practice it is currently only incarcerated individuals who are prevented from accessing the award.
6. 022 Pa. Code §121.6(a); 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), 69.
7. "Pennsylvania State Grant Program Summer Eligibility Requirements," PHEAA, accessed June 7, 2019, <https://www.pheaa.org/documents/sgsp/ph/summer-eligibility-requirements.pdf>; "Pennsylvania Targeted Industry Program," PHEAA, accessed June 7, 2019, <https://www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/pa-tip/prepare.shtml>; "Ready to Succeed Scholarship (RTSS) Program," PHEAA, accessed June 7, 2019, <https://www.pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/rtss/>; this grant requires students to meet all the requirements for the State Grant Program; therefore, incarcerated students would not be eligible.
8. Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, Bureau of Correction Education, <https://www.cor.pa.gov/Inmates/Documents/Education%20and%20Vocation%20Documents/Education%20Programs.pdf>; "Educational/Vocational Programs," Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, accessed June 21, 2019, <https://www.cor.pa.gov/Inmates/Pages/Vocational-Programs.aspx>; Bureau of Correction Education, Vocational Programs: Report (2017), <https://www.cor.pa.gov/Inmates/Documents/Education%20and%20Vocation%20Documents/Vocational%20Programs%20by%20Facility.pdf>.
9. 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 7, 2019, <https://www.vera.org/projects/college-in-prison>.
10. U.S. Department of Education, "12,000 Incarcerated Students to Enroll;" "College in Prison," Vera Institute of Justice, accessed May 7, 2019, <https://www.vera.org/projects/college-in-prison>; "Villanova Undergraduate Degree Program at SCI Graterford," Prison Studies Project, accessed June 21, 2019, <http://prisonstudiesproject.org/2017/07/villanova-undergraduate-degree-program-at-sci-graterford/>.
11. Ibid.
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 correctional education directors, July 12, 2019; 37 Pa. Code § 93.10(a)(1); Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Policy 7.6.1-1.E.2.b, 7.6.1-1.M.5.b, 7.6.1-Glossary, <https://www.cor.pa.gov/About%20Us/Documents/DOC%20Policies/07.06.01%20Delivery%20of%20Educational%20Services.pdf>.
14. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Policy 7.6.1-1.K.2, <https://www.cor.pa.gov/About%20Us/Documents/DOC%20Policies/07.06.01%20Delivery%20of%20Educational%20Services.pdf>.
15. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Policy 7.6.1-1.M.5.c, <https://www.cor.pa.gov/About%20Us/Documents/DOC%20Policies/07.06.01%20Delivery%20of%20Educational%20Services.pdf>.
16. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Policy 7.6.1-1.E.2.a, 7.6.1-1.K.2, <https://www.cor.pa.gov/About%20Us/Documents/DOC%20Policies/07.06.01%20Delivery%20of%20Educational%20Services.pdf>.
17. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
18. 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.
19. Pennsylvania State University Common Application disclosure.
20. 61 Pa.C.S. § 6135(a)(7); The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
21. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
22. Ibid.
23. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.