

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 West Virginia.



HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

Correctional Agency Funding

- The West Virginia 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 privately funded foundation grants.³
- West Virginia is not using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act funds for postsecondary education.⁴

State Financial Aid

- The Higher Education Adult Part-time Student award has a statutory restriction that prevents incarcerated students from receiving the award.⁵ While the West Virginia Higher Education Grant does not have any relevant statutory restrictions,⁶ the policy of the state is to use the Pell Grant's federal eligibility requirements; therefore, incarcerated students are not eligible.⁷ Incarcerated students may be able to access the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship and other grants if the applicant meets the eligibility criteria.⁸



WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- The West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOC) provides career and technical education in auto repair, carpentry, culinary arts, electricity, and welding.⁹

Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- Associate and bachelor's degrees are offered through the Second Chance Pell Pilot sites at Ashland University¹⁰ and Glenville State College.¹¹
- Bachelor of arts degrees in Bible/theology and pastoral ministry are offered through Mount Olive Bible College-Appalachian Bible College.¹²

Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

- West Virginia 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.¹³



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. DOC policy dictates that people in maximum security are not eligible to participate in postsecondary programming.¹⁴

Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

- ➔ West Virginia has 11 state universities, 2 of which used the 2019-2020 Common Application.¹⁵ Neither school requires applicants to disclose their past criminal history.
- ➔ Four of the nine state colleges and universities that do not use the Common Application require applicants to disclose their criminal history: Bluefield State College, Concord University, Shepherd University, and West Liberty University.



WHAT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS EXIST TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION?

Postsecondary Education as a Factor in Parole Decisions

- ➔ If applicable, the parole board must consider whether the person who is incarcerated has satisfactorily participated in postsecondary education programs when granting or denying parole.¹⁶

Support and Services in the Community

- ➔ The parole-granting agency provides information on postsecondary education, but does not provide occupational training, postsecondary education advisors and coordinators, and vocational credential testing.¹⁷

Coursework Transfer Policies

- ➔ West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation 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.¹⁸

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. W. Va. CSR § 126-7-4 (4.1.a); 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. W. Va. Code § 18C-5-7(c)(5).
6. W. Va. Code § 18C-5-5.
7. 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), 88-89.
8. PROMISE Scholarship, W. Va. Code § 18C-7-6; West Virginia Engineering, Science, and Technology Scholarship, W. Va. Code §18C-6-3; WV Invests Grant requires a drug test each semester, W. Va. Code § 18C-9-5(a)(11).
9. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
10. West Virginia Division of Corrections, *Annual Report: FY 2018* (Charleston, West Virginia: West Virginia Division of Corrections), 35, 39, https://dcr.wv.gov/resources/Documents/annual_reports/WVDOC%2018%20Annual%20Report.pdf; “College in Prison,” Vera Institute of Justice, accessed July 2, 2019, <https://www.vera.org/projects/college-in-prison>; 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>.
11. U.S. Department of Education, “12,000 Incarcerated Students to Enroll,” “College in Prison,” Vera Institute of Justice.
12. West Virginia Division of Corrections, *Annual Report: FY 2018*, 34; “Mount Olive Bible College,” Appalachian Bible College, accessed November 25, 2019, <https://abc.edu/mobc/index.php>.
13. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
14. Ibid.
15. 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.
16. W. Va. Code § 62-12-13(b)(G)(3); W. Va. Code § 62-12-13(l)(1)(B); W. Va. CSR § 92-1-6(6.1.a), (6.1.b), and (6.1.j).
17. 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 correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.