

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 Nebraska.



HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

Correctional Agency Funding

- While the Nebraska legislature may appropriate state funds for postsecondary education programs in state correctional facilities,² currently, Nebraska Correctional Services does not.³ They do fund the vocational and life skills grant that pays for most of the postsecondary education programs in the state.⁴ Postsecondary education is funded through federal sources—such as the Second Chance Pell pilot program⁵—reentry partnership grant funding, Prison Ministries Collaboratives, self-pay, and private sources.⁶
- Nebraska is not using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act funds for postsecondary education.⁷

State Financial Aid

- Nebraska's financial aid awards do not have statutory restrictions that prevent people who are incarcerated from receiving the awards. However, in practice, the Nebraska Coordinating Commission on Postsecondary Education uses the federal Pell Grant requirements to determine eligibility for the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Fund, the state's main grant; therefore, incarcerated students are prohibited from accessing it.⁸ Other awards may be open to current and formerly incarcerated applicants.⁹



WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- In partnership with the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS), Metropolitan Community College,¹⁰ and Mid-Plains Community College¹¹ provide career and technical education in flagging, forklift, microcomputer technology, process and power operations, and welding; as well as programs leading to an Occupational Safety and Health Administration certificate and ServSafe certificate.¹²
- Certificates are provided through the federally funded Second Chance Pell Pilot program site at Metropolitan Community College.¹³

Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- Individuals may participate in postsecondary correspondence courses geared toward college credit at their own expense.¹⁴
- Associate degrees are offered to women at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women

through Second Chance Education with York College, which is funded through private funds and the NDCS's vocational and life skills grant.¹⁵

- ➔ College courses are offered through Mid-Plains Community College¹⁶ and through the Second Chance Pell Pilot site at Metropolitan Community College.¹⁷
- ➔ Nebraska does not provide bachelor's degrees.¹⁸

Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

- ➔ Nebraska 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.¹⁹



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.²⁰
- ➔ If withdrawn from an education program for disciplinary reasons, a participant will be eligible to reenroll six months to one year after their withdrawal.²¹

Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

- ➔ Nebraska has six state universities, one of which—University of Nebraska-Lincoln—used the 2019–2020 Common Application.²² It does not ask about criminal convictions.
- ➔ Three of the five state colleges and universities that do not use the Common Application require students to disclose their criminal history: Chadron State College, Peru State College, and Wayne State College. These questions require disclosure of juvenile offenses, probation, community service, jail sentences, and driver's license suspensions.



WHAT INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS EXIST TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION?

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.²³

Parole Conditions Related to Postsecondary Education

- ➔ The parole board requires each individual to propose a parole plan, which may include participating in academic and vocational education.²⁴
- ➔ Post-release participation in postsecondary education can meet a parole requirement to seek or obtain employment.²⁵

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 nor vocational credential testing.²⁶

Coursework Transfer Policies

- ➔ NDCS has articulation agreements with the 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.²⁷ Metro Community College has continuation funding for coursework for students who attended the program while incarcerated once they are released.²⁸

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. R.R.S. Neb. § 83-904(2).
3. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
4. Email correspondence between CSG Justice Center and Brian Walsh, February 21, 2020.
5. 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>.
6. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
7. *Ibid.*
8. R.R.S. Neb. § 85-1920; 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), 51.
9. Access College Early Scholarship, R.R.S. Neb. § 85-2104; Community College Gap Assistance Program, R.R.S. Neb. § 85-2003.
10. "Re-Entry," Metropolitan Community College, accessed June 3, 2019, <https://www.mccneb.edu/Prospective-Students/Student-Tools-Resources/Re-Entry.aspx>.
11. "Vocational/Life Skills Programs," Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, accessed June 3, 2019, <https://corrections.nebraska.gov/about/rehabilitation/vocational/life-skills-programs>.
12. "Re-Entry," Metropolitan Community College, accessed June 3, 2019, <https://www.mccneb.edu/Prospective-Students/Student-Tools-Resources/Re-Entry.aspx>; Vocational/Life Skills Programs, Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, accessed June 3, 2019, <https://corrections.nebraska.gov/about/rehabilitation/vocational/life-skills-programs>.
13. 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>.
14. Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, Policy No. 106.01, https://corrections.nebraska.gov/system/files/rules_reg_files/106.01_2019.pdf.
15. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019; "Transforming Lives Behind Bars, York College, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.york.edu/secondchance.html>; Email correspondence between CSG Justice Center and Brian Walsh, February 21, 2020.
16. "Vocational/Life Skills Programs," Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, accessed June 3, 2019, <https://corrections.nebraska.gov/about/rehabilitation/vocational/life-skills-programs>.
17. "Re-Entry," Metropolitan Community College, accessed June 3, 2019, <https://www.mccneb.edu/Prospective-Students/Student-Tools-Resources/Re-Entry.aspx>.
18. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. 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.
23. Nebraska Board of Parole Rule § 4-206(B)(2), <https://parole.nebraska.gov/sites/parole.nebraska.gov/files/doc/5-21-2019%20Adopted%20Board%20of%20Parole%20Rules.pdf>; The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
24. R.R.S. Neb. § 83-1,107(6)(a)(i).
25. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
26. *Ibid.*
27. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
28. *Ibid.*