

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 Texas.



HOW ARE SERVICES FUNDED?

Correctional Agency Funding

- The Texas legislature appropriates state funds for college programs in state correctional facilities.² Postsecondary education is also funded through federal sources—such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act,³ the Second Chance Pell pilot program, and Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act funds—and self-pay.⁴ Further, the Hazlewood Act provides funding for educational coursework for qualified veterans who are incarcerated.⁵

State Financial Aid

- The largest Texas financial aid programs have statutory restrictions that prevent people who are currently incarcerated for felony or controlled substance convictions, and for an additional two years following their sentence, from receiving aid.⁶ Smaller grants, such as the Texas Public Educational Grant Program, do not pose restrictions based on incarceration status and are used to support correctional education; however, applicants on disciplinary probation may be deemed ineligible at the discretion of the governing board.⁷



WHAT IS OFFERED INSIDE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?

Career and Technical Education and Certifications

- The Texas Department of Criminal Justice provides career and technical education in automotive technology, cabinet making, computer technology, construction carpentry, culinary arts/hospitality management, data processing, electrical technology, electronics, horticulture, HVAC, industrial design (drafting), logistics, manufacturing (production technician), network analyst, office administration, and welding.⁸
- Certificates are provided through the federally funded Second Chance Pell Pilot program sites at Alvin Community College, Cedar Valley College, Lamar State College – Port Arthur, Lee College, and Southwest Texas Junior College.⁹
- Windham School District, funded by State General Revenue Line Item in the Texas Education Agency Budget and Perkins, also provides more than 20 industry-recognized certificate programs.¹⁰

Associate and Bachelor's Degrees

- Associate degrees are offered through Central Texas College and Trinity Valley Community College.¹¹

- ➔ Associate degrees are offered through the Second Chance Pell Pilot site colleges at Alvin Community College, Clarendon College, Lamar State College – Port Arthur, Lee College, Southwest Texas Junior College, and Wiley College.¹²
- ➔ Bachelor’s degrees are offered through the Second Chance Pell Pilot site colleges at University of Houston – Clear Lake and Wiley College.¹³
- ➔ Bachelor’s degrees are also offered through Texas A&M University-Central Texas.¹⁴

Labor Market, Employer Feedback, and Outcome Data Alignment

- ➔ Texas 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 proximity to release date, custody level, and behavior during incarceration.¹⁶ Some programs give preference to students who are eligible for parole and/or five years from their release date.¹⁷
- ➔ If withdrawn from an education program for disciplinary reasons, a participant will be eligible to reenroll one year after their withdrawal.¹⁸

Use of Criminal History in State College and University Applications

- ➔ Texas has 37 state universities, 3 of which used the 2019–2020 Common Application.¹⁹ These schools did not add questions asking applicants to disclose their criminal history.
- ➔ The remaining universities in the state use an application portal called Apply Texas, which requires all applicants to disclose whether they are currently on academic suspension. Twelve of these 34 state colleges and universities required students to disclose their criminal history: Prairie View A&M University; Sam Houston State University; Tarleton State University; Texas A&M International University; Texas A&M University at its Galveston, Central Texas, College Station, Commerce, Corpus Christi, San Antonio, and Texarkana campuses; and West Texas A&M University.



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 and vocational activities during incarceration as a factor when granting or denying parole.²⁰

Parole Conditions Related to Postsecondary Education

- ➔ Texas has a Post-Secondary Education Reimbursement plan where the state will cover the costs of some academic or vocational training while a person is incarcerated. However, upon release, the student will have to reimburse the state as a condition of parole.²¹
- ➔ Post-release participation in postsecondary education can meet a parole requirement to seek or obtain employment.²²

Statutory or Administrative Benefits

- ➔ Incentives for participating in postsecondary education programs include release from work requirements. This incentive is for students who are enrolled full-time in a postsecondary program; students enrolled part-time will also be required to maintain a job—although this job should be reflective of their postsecondary pursuits.

Support and Services in the Community

- ➔ The parole-granting agency provides information on postsecondary education, but not occupational training, postsecondary education advisors and coordinators, and vocational credential testing.²³

Coursework Transfer Policies

- ➔ Texas Department of Criminal Justice has contracts with the colleges and universities providing correctional education that the coursework must be equivalent to the coursework offered in the community. The colleges and universities then have formalized articulation agreements to ensure the complete transfer of credits.²⁴

- 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.
- The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019; Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Legislative Appropriations Request for Fiscal Years 2020-2021 (Texas Board of Criminal Justice, 2018) 114, https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/bfd/LAR_FY2020-21.pdf.
- The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Offender Orientation Handbook* (Huntsville, TX: Texas Department of Criminal Justice, 2017), 45.
- "Hazlewood Act," Texas Veterans Commission, accessed February 26, 2020, <https://www.tvc.texas.gov/education/hazlewood-act/>.
- Tex. Educ. Code § 56.304(b); Tex. Educ. Code § 56.404(b).
- Tex. Educ. Code § 56.034(b).
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Rehabilitation Programs Division/ Post-Secondary Correctional Education, "Academic/Vocational Interest Form (Male), accessed November 22, 2019, https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/rpd/Academic_Vocational_Interest_Form_Male.pdf; Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Rehabilitation Programs Division/ Post-Secondary Correctional Education, "Academic/Vocational Interest Form (Female), accessed November 22, 2019, https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/rpd/Academic_Vocational_Interest_Form_Female.pdf.
- 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>.
- Annual Performance Report SY19 (2018-2019)*, (Huntsville, TX: Windham School District, 2019), <https://wsdtx.org/en/reports/annual-performance-reports-apr>.
- "TDCJ," Central Texas College, accessed June 25, 2019, <https://www.ctcd.edu/locations/other-texas-locations/gatesville/tdcj/>. Phone correspondence between CSG Justice Center and TDCJ, February 25, 2020.
- U.S. Department of Education, "12,000 Incarcerated Students to Enroll." Wiley College is located in Texas and is a recipient of the Second Chance Pell pilot funds, but their programming is located in Louisiana.
- Ibid.
- Phone correspondence between CSG Justice Center and TDCJ, February 25, 2020.
- The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
- Ibid.
- The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019; Phone correspondence between CSG Justice Center and TDCJ, February 25, 2020.
- The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
- 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.
- The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019; "Revised Parole Guidelines," Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, accessed June 25, 2019, https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp/parole_guidelines/parole_guidelines.html.
- The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state correctional education directors, July 12, 2019.
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice, *Offender Orientation Handbook* (Huntsville, TX: Texas Department of Criminal Justice, 2017), 45; "Post-Secondary Correctional Education Academic/Vocational Interest Form," Texas Department of Criminal Justice Rehabilitation Programs Division, accessed November 21, 2019, https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/rpd/Academic_Vocational_Interest_Form.pdf. The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of state parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
- The Council of State Governments Justice Center electronic survey of parole-granting agencies, July 12, 2019.
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