



# Mapping the Landscape of Higher Education in New York State Prisons

**JOHN  
JAY** COLLEGE  
OF  
CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE

**PRI** PRISONER REENTRY  
INSTITUTE

February 2019

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The Prisoner Reentry Institute (PRI) is a center of research and action at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY. PRI is committed to providing opportunities for people to live successfully in the community after involvement with the justice system. Capitalizing on its position within a large public university and recognizing the transformational power of education, PRI focuses much of its work on increasing access to higher education and career pathways for people with conviction histories. PRI's comprehensive and strategic approach includes direct service, research, technical assistance, and policy advocacy.

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# Preface

It has been our privilege to have the opportunity to conduct this research. In doing so, we developed an even greater appreciation for the college-in-prison programs in New York State and for the initiative, vision, passion, and commitment of the many people responsible for the creation and operation of these programs. We also came to believe that New York is at a crossroads, and that effectively harnessing the growing interest and support for college-in-prison programs will require a deliberate planning process to create a more comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable system.

As detailed in this report, New York has an amazing portfolio of college programs that were developed after the elimination of Pell and TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) eligibility for incarcerated students. Both the Department of Corrections & Community Supervision (DOCCS) and the higher education community stepped up to mitigate the loss of so many programs. The result is an eclectic mix of 15 different college programs involving over 30 institutions of higher learning that are providing college programs in 25 prisons, or roughly half of the state's correctional facilities.

Of the participating colleges, roughly two-thirds are private institutions and one-third belong to the public university systems of SUNY and CUNY. All of the college programs detailed in the report grant credits for the courses they provide in prisons, although there are other colleges providing non-credit-bearing courses in some prisons as well. Some programs enable people to earn degrees while incarcerated, while others have a reentry focus and are designed to have people begin college in prison and complete their degree in the community.

Most programs are clustered around the city and only a few reside in upstate prisons. Each college program has determined which courses and how many credits to offer, and is responsible for creating its own library, establishing a computer lab, providing academic advisement, and, in some cases, assisting students in reentry planning and enrollment after release. There are significant differences among programs in their academic offerings, the credits and degrees that a student can earn, and the resources that support the program.

It is impressive that programs and correctional facilities have achieved so much in the years since Pell and TAP funding ended. Support for college-in-prison programs is strong and growing. The recent infusion of funding from the Criminal Justice Improvement Initiative of the District Attorney of New York (DANY) and Second Chance Pell pilot program has added badly needed resources to part of the system. There is also optimism that Washington may restore Pell eligibility for incarcerated students and that Albany might expand TAP eligibility to incarcerated students.

We need a plan if we are to ensure that the growing support for college in prison results in a better system of college in prison in New York State. Right now, the opportunity to participate in a college program depends largely on where an individual is incarcerated, whether the facility has a college program, whether that program has a slot, and whether the program aligns with the individual's interests and academic goals. As a matter of equity, college should be available throughout the entire state prison system and incarcerated people should have access to reasonably similar course offerings and academic supports.

College-in-prison programs in New York State are fully responsible for funding themselves and have relied upon philanthropic money and donated services to survive. This is a vulnerability. Foundations' funding interests change over time. And programs initiated by individual faculty may lack the real institutional commitment that will sustain them. Program existence can therefore be tenuous and there is no assurance that the programs on which the state relies will continue from year to year.

Importantly, the DANY Initiative focused on some systemic issues for the seven college programs it funds, including academic quality control, ensuring transferability of credits, and equipping the providers to assist their students

with reentry. Their efforts and the premises below provide a starting place for considering what it would mean to reframe individual programs into a system.

- Someone’s ability to pursue higher education while incarcerated should not depend on where they happen to be housed. Rather, everyone should have the opportunity to maximize their educational progress during the time that they are incarcerated. Therefore, the availability of educational programs in facilities should be considered when individuals are assessed and assigned to facilities and college programs should be instituted in the facilities that do not currently offer higher education.
- College-in-prison programs should meet minimum academic standards, including the number of credits that can be earned and possibility of earning a degree or degrees. There should also be minimum standards for the resources that support college study: libraries, computer labs, and areas appropriate for studying. Transferability of credits among college-in-prison programs and to SUNY and CUNY, and academic quality control are also system-wide issues.
- Lastly, education should be recognized as an important component of reentry and this should be reflected in pre-release information and services, as well as in available supports in communities to which people are returning.

New York has a unique and rich landscape of college-in-prison programs; we also have some gaps and vulnerabilities. To create a more comprehensive, integrated and sustainable system will require leadership and investment from the state. Planning should start now.

Ann Jacobs  
Marsha Weissman

## Acknowledgements

The Prisoner Reentry Institute (PRI) would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Ford Foundation, David Rockefeller Fund, and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for making this project possible.

We would also like to thank the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) for their commitment to higher education for people in prison and for the collaboration that made this report possible. Specifically, we thank Acting Commissioner Anthony J. Annucci, for seeing the value of this project and for his support along the way. DOCCS Central Office staff provided us with valuable data on the DOCCS population and guidance throughout the process. Special thanks to Jeff McKoy, Deputy Commissioner for Programs; Linda Hollmen, Assistant Commissioner for Program Services; and Emily Bessette, Director of Education. We want to especially thank the DOCCS Research team previously led by Dr. David Aziz and now by Michele Staley, Director of Research, Brian Lane, Chief of Program Research, and Sarah Peterson, Program Research Specialist. We also thank all of the DOCCS Educational Supervisors for providing us with valuable insights through interviews and facilitating the distribution of student surveys – an integral part of this report.

The execution of this project would not be possible without the contributions and insights of our peers and partners who believe that education is a fundamental tool for access to success. The full participation of every college-in-prison program in New York State is no small feat! It is a testament to our shared values, commitment to access to higher education for all, and to the potential for a more coordinated statewide effort to increase access and success for incarcerated students. Thank you: Bard Prison Initiative (BPI), Bennington College – Prison Education Initiative, CUNY – Prison-to-College Pipeline (P2CP), The Columbia University Prison Education Program, Cornell Prison Education Program (CPEP), Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison, Marymount Manhattan College – Bedford Hills College Program, Medaille College, Mercy College, New York Theological Seminary, New York University Prison Education Program, North County Community College Second Chance Program, Nyack College, Rising Hope, St. Lawrence University Inside-Out Exchange Program, Siena College, SUNY Sullivan Community College, SUNY Genesee Community College, SUNY Jefferson Community College, Mohawk Valley Community College – College-in-Prison Program, SUNY Ulster Community College, and Vassar College: Inside-Out Program.

Thank you to the CUNY's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for their support of this project and a commitment to ethical, sound research practices, and to Lynda Mules at John Jay's Office for the Advancement of Research for her assistance in shepherding us through the IRB process. This report has been a collaboration that has benefited from the support of pioneers in the field like Jeremy Travis, Debbie Mukamal, Rebecca Silbert, and Douglas Wood. PRI extends special thanks to them for being a resource and a guide for us during this research.

We are especially grateful to Jan Holland for her work designing the methodology and executing the data collection on this project; Nicole Dreisbach and Fran Mercedes for providing essential quantitative and qualitative data analyses, respectively; and Marsha Weissman for carefully editing and revising the report. We also thank Laura DeVries of John Jay College's Department of Marketing & Development for her assistance, Matt Bond and Zoë Johnson for editing the report, and Alpha1C for designing the final product.

Finally, PRI recognizes Bianca van Heydoorn for her vision, leadership, and commitment to serving the broader reentry and higher education communities.

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

New York State has long been a leader in education, both higher education and general education in prison, dating back to the 1800s. Following reforms implemented during the administration of Governor Franklin Roosevelt, New York State was later recognized as having the best prison education system in the country (Gehring 1997). At the heyday of higher education in prison, when incarcerated people were eligible for federal Pell and New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grants, there were 70 higher education programs in New York State prisons. The loss of financial aid eligibility for those programs created significant hurdles to college-in-prison programs, consequences of which still exist today. However, the creativity and ingenuity of college faculty and administrators, the commitment of New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) officials and staff, support from private foundations, and the persistence and leadership by incarcerated people kept alive the vision of college programs in prison. There are now 15 college programs involving over 30 institutions of higher education operating in 25 DOCCS facilities. There is growing momentum to restore public funding for these programs as witnessed by the Federal Second Chance Pell Pilot and the funds provided by the District Attorney of New York Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (DANY CJII).

This report is intended to help state and local policymakers, institutions of higher education, DOCCS, advocates, and the general public understand the landscape of college education programs in prison, appreciate their value, and strategize about how to build on current success. The report describes the two systems – higher education and corrections – that are seemingly distinct, yet come together to provide access to college education for incarcerated people. We look at the challenges in meshing these two systems, how both corrections and college staff work to overcome problems, and what might be the next steps to build on the strong foundation of higher education in prison.

## Why it Matters

Higher education is essential in 21st-century America. The often-cited reasons are utilitarian in nature, relating to the development of human capital needed to advance economic growth. Much support for higher education in prisons is expressed in terms of a concern for public safety and the recognition that a college education reduces recidivism. This, in turn, can reduce spending on imprisonment, producing a saving for taxpayers. However, support for higher education does not just rest on a cost-benefit analysis. Rather, higher education has long been valued for its importance to preserving a democratic society – a deeply held tenet dating back to the foundation of the country. Higher education, whether for incarcerated students or students in the community, develops critical thinking skills that connect people to the world in expansive ways and help them become thoughtful, participatory citizens. Providing access to higher education to people in prison also positions them to be better parents and role models for their children even while incarcerated. Once released, formerly incarcerated people who attended college will be better situated to gain employment at higher wages, to encourage their children to achieve higher levels of education, and to be more informed parents with respect to the health and general well-being of their family.

There are also racial equity issues addressed by providing incarcerated people the opportunity to access higher education. The tragic, but undeniable, truth is that people of color are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and underrepresented in higher education. Black and Latino people are 36 percent of the total state population, 34 percent of the students enrolled in public colleges in the state (24% of SUNY students; 57% CUNY) but make up 73 percent of the prison population. Ensuring access to college in prison is a step toward greater inclusion of people of color in higher education. Making college possible in prison both leads to achievement of degrees for some students and increases prospects for enrollment in the community, particularly at SUNY and CUNY schools, whose missions include expanding access to higher education for marginalized populations.



## Method

We undertook this study through surveys of incarcerated college students, interviews with administrators of college-in-prison programs and DOCCS staff, and observations of many programs in operation. We also reviewed the literature on higher education in prison – its history and evidence of its effectiveness. The surveys, interviews, and observations are the backbone of this report.

## Findings

The data we examined in the course of producing this report underscore that college in prison is one of the most reliably rehabilitative activities that can be offered. The information provided by incarcerated students speaks to the fundamental value of education, i.e., the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds, and to have consciousness-expanding, transformative experiences. One student wrote:

*The college program has made my life fuller and more rewarding ... Being in college has made me realize how much potential I threw away. It has also taught me about my capacity to change and made me realize how much I took from my victim when I took his life. I don't think most people consider these revelations when they talk/think about education in prison.*

Students also reported that their participation in college improved relationships among family members, particularly children, a benefit that goes beyond the prison walls. Corrections officials and students themselves report that higher education also contributes to an improved environment within the prison itself, as incarcerated students are positive role models for their peers.

The literature we reviewed and information provided by the college-in-prison programs themselves strongly supports the theory that participation in college/earning a college degree while incarcerated is a “producer” of public safety. Depending on the study and program, recidivism rates vary from as low as 2 percent to about 15 percent, with each measure significantly lower than the general recidivism rates. For example, one program reports that only four percent of students returned to prison for any reason (new crime or parole violation) within three years following release, compared to a 40 percent rate for the total DOCCS population.

The findings drawn from our observations, interviews, and surveys underscore the strengths of college-in-prison programs in New York State, as well as opportunities to strengthen these vital resources. The key findings are as follows:

- College programs are valued by DOCCS administrators as an asset to the prison environment, by college programs administrators and faculty as an opportunity to live up to the college mission and to provide an intellectually fulfilling classroom experience, and by incarcerated students as the most productive way to serve their sentence and a life-changing opportunity.
- College-in-prison programs in New York State have benefitted from the entrepreneurial spirit of their founders and offer a range of choices and options that engage a diversity of students within the DOCCS system.
- Yet, access to college-in-prison programs is heavily dependent on whether an individual is assigned to a prison with a college program, whether they meet the eligibility criteria of the particular program at that prison, and whether the program has available seats. As a result, enrolling in a college program while incarcerated is currently a function of chance instead of a prospective student's interest or ability.
- There are significant differences in the resources available to programs – including funding, staff support, space, and access to library materials and computers in facilities. There are also differences in the level and kind of support provided leadership – both in each prison and in each participating college – that affect the operation of college-in-prison programs.

## Opportunities for the Future

Based on the literature review, data, interviews, surveys, and observations conducted through our research, we considered how college programs in prisons might be strengthened and how more incarcerated students could take advantage of these programs. Our recommendations are intended to complement and build on the tremendous work done so far and the diversity of programs that exist. The suggestions are in fact built on the promising practices we have observed and offer ways to disseminate the policies, procedures, and practices that respond to the needs of students as well as of college administrators, faculty, and DOCCS. There are opportunities for growth within DOCCS and the college programs that depend on the collaboration of both. There is also a critical role for policymakers if higher education in prison is to be expanded.

## Opportunities for DOCCS

In 2006, the State Legislature amended Penal Law §1.05[6] in recognition that “the promotion of successful and productive reentry and reintegration into society” is a core goal of any sentence, including sentences that carry a term of incarceration. Under the amended law, increased significance is placed on breaking the cycle of recidivism by imposing sentences of a length and type that will promote successful reintegration and increase public safety. Facilitating college-in-prison programs is perhaps one of the most effective ways that DOCCS can contribute to this goal. There are a few key areas where DOCCS is uniquely positioned to realize their commitment to education and successful reentry:

**Assessment & Assignment:** Expand the educational assessments conducted by DOCCS during DOCCS intake to capture educational information including educational aspirations and, to the greatest extent possible, assign incarcerated people to prisons that have the appropriate educational services.

**Documentation & Data Collection:** Track the educational achievements of incarcerated people to document progress during incarceration and to document recidivism of people who earned college credits or college degrees during their incarceration. This information should regularly be made publicly available.

**Training and Support for Correctional Staff:** Include information about college programs in basic training and orientation of new employees, as well as in regular in-service training to staff. Engage DOCCS staff members who support higher education in prison to educate their co-workers; promote existing tuition reimbursement opportunities for DOCCS employees and provide college planning information that could be useful to staff with children; and acknowledge correctional staff for college graduations and other program achievements that take place in their facility.

**Supervise and Facilitate Access to College Programs:** Designate appropriate, accessible classroom, study, computer, and library space for college programs; ensure that staff facilitate student movement to classes; and establish a system-wide, rather than facility-based, designation of college programs that are accessible to all interested individuals;

**Rejuvenate Educational Release** as a meaningful temporary release program.

## Opportunities for Colleges

The engagement of colleges and universities in prison-based programs is aligned with the mission and purpose of higher education, that is, to make this valuable opportunity available to people from all walks of life. This is particularly central to public institutions. Through college-in-prison initiatives, college institutions enhance diversity and inclusion so critical to higher education.

**SUNY-Specific:** Given the relative geographic proximity of SUNY institutions to DOCCS facilities, SUNY should be encouraged to establish college programs in prisons that currently lack them.

**Administrative & Resource Support:** Provide adequate administrative support to prison-based staff, faculty, and students, including assistance in matters related to financial aid, registration, and obtaining transcripts for students. Enrich libraries and academic advisement. Offer tuition waivers to DOCCS employees who play instrumental roles in facilitating access to higher education in prison. A similar practice exists for staff within some human service organizations that accept and supervise interns.

**Academic Support:** Offer developmental or college readiness education courses to prepare people for college. Provide pre-release education planning that makes it more likely for people to attend college in the community after release.

**Reentry Support:** Work on efforts to make their campuses welcoming environments for people returning to the community after incarceration.

## Shared Opportunities for DOCCS and Colleges

DOCCS and college-in-prison programs have already built strong partnerships that have bridged institutional divides and allowed incarcerated people in 25 prisons across New York State to access higher education. Further collaboration can preserve the vibrancy of approaches while ensuring that promising practices are shared across programs and facilities for the benefit of incarcerated students.

### **Networking/Learning Communities:**

- Engage in cross training – provide information regularly and in a variety of formats (training sessions, manuals, meetings, etc.) so that both correctional and college staff members understand the institutional demands on and practices of the other system;
- Explore ways to provide and/or expand student access to electronic academic resources, such as calculators, computers, and lab equipment, which are available to campus-based students;
- Offer informational sessions for correctional staff to inform them about college opportunities, including financial aid for themselves and/or children;
- Develop an understanding among college providers about the needs of reentering students so that reentry-focused educational planning can be aligned with the requirements and challenges faced by newly released people.

**College Program – DOCCS Agreements:** Establish formal agreements between DOCCS and the college providers that address the following:

- Resources to be provided by the college;
- Resources to be provided by the DOCCS facility;
- Agreement to offer credit-bearing courses taught by qualified faculty and at a level consistent with the expectations of students in the community;
- Agreement on transfer of college credits among and between college-in-prison programs; and
- Agreement to accept academically qualified students to home campus upon release such as existed in and around 1981 as part of the Unified College Program.

**Documentation & Data Collection:** Standardize data collection and reporting to DOCCS that covers key information about the number and progress of incarcerated students participating in college programs.

**Course & Program Offerings:** Work to diversify course offerings that are responsive to (a) security concerns regarding equipment needed for math, science, and business courses; and (b) affords students a well-rounded education and access to different majors of study. Ensure that all incarcerated students have access to college programs regardless of time to release by allowing and sustaining different program models, i.e.,

reentry model programs that target people closer to release and degree-granting models that offer opportunities for people serving longer sentences.

### **Opportunities for Policymakers**

Policymakers, particularly elected officials, are in the best position to support and expand higher education in prison. In doing so, elected officials have a chance to forward a set of agendas important to all residents of New York State: development of social and human capital, ensuring all people have the opportunity to further their education, and strengthening democracy and public safety. Policymakers can play a leadership role in building public support for college-in-prison programs in several ways, including supporting public funding for higher education programs in prison, specifically restoration of TAP eligibility to incarcerated students. If not politically viable in the immediate term, they can: explore alternative public funding options; join with national efforts urging the restoration of federal Pell grants to formerly incarcerated students; bring together multiple legislative committees and executive departments concerned with health, employment, economic development, and education; convene and participate in public forums that educate New York State residents about the value of a college education in prison; and expand/build a network of educational reentry supports in the community.

## I. Introduction

*Education, in its enlarged sense, is the true title for the process ... the effect of education is reformatory... Education helps to secure admission to respectable society, without which permanent reformation cannot be accomplished.*

Those words were spoken by Zebulon Reed Brockway at the annual convention of the National Prison Association<sup>1</sup> in 1870. That same year, Brockway, with a reputation as a reformer, became the Warden of New York's Elmira Penitentiary. Elmira became the first example of a prison with a formalized education program. Brockway recruited teachers from the Elmira city schools and Elmira College, including a professor of geography and natural science. In short, Elmira became a correctional facility anchored in educational programming that spanned K-12, vocational, and college courses (Cabana 1995). The Elmira Penitentiary became a model for other states and countries.

New York State has long been a leader in education, both higher education and general education in prison. The state established the first prison library circa 1840, and in 1847, the New York State legislature enacted the earliest example of a comprehensive prison act that included the first officially designated prison education department. The act included a provision that "common school teachers" be available in all of the state's prisons (Cabana 1995). New York can point to other leaders in efforts to bring education to prisons: Austin MacCormick and Thomas Mott Osborne are two pioneers in correction reform including expansion of education. Following reforms implemented during the administration of Governor Franklin Roosevelt, New York State was later recognized as having the best prison education system in the country (Gehring 1997).

Education, as an element of correctional programming, has been marked by ebbs and flows, and its popularity often reflected the mores of the time. The earliest efforts, some of which date to colonial times, focused on teaching incarcerated people to read the Bible to facilitate penitence. Over time, as education in the larger society became more secular in nature, so did the nature of correctional education programs. By the final third of the twentieth century, as college education became more widely accessible, so too did the interest in bringing higher education programs to prison.

Nowhere are the ebbs and flows of higher education in prison more visible than the decade of the 1990s. In the early 1990s, just before the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 barred the use of Pell grants for incarcerated people and the 1995 prohibition against the use of New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grants, there were 70 higher education programs in New York State prisons with approximately 3,000 incarcerated people enrolled.<sup>2</sup> Following the loss of Pell and TAP, the number of higher education programs in New York State prisons plummeted to four.

The damage to correctional-based higher education programs continued for about 15 years, until calls for criminal justice reform generally and a resurgence of interest in the benefits of higher education specifically gained traction in the public imagination and political arenas. There are now 15 college programs involving over 30 institutions of higher education operating in 25 Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) prisons.<sup>3</sup> There is a growing body of evidence nationally that supports the myriad benefits that come from such programs. New York State continues to be a pioneer in this arena. The current structure and diversity of programs across the state presents an opportunity to serve as a model – similar to the New Jersey STEP and California Renewing Communities initiatives – for coordinated, statewide access to higher education in prison.

Thus the time is ripe to revisit how to support, sustain, and expand higher education in New York State prisons. In recent years, there has been an increase in private investment to sustain and expand programs, proposals to

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<sup>1</sup> The National Prison Association is the precursor of American Correctional Association.

<sup>2</sup> This represented about 1% of all the TAP recipients in the state that year.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics regarding college-in-prison programs were gathered in the summer and fall of 2017; numbers presented here may have fluctuated.

reintroduce TAP funding to eligible incarcerated people, and efforts to secure the restoration of federal Pell grants. In August of 2017, Governor Andrew Cuomo and District Attorney of New York (DANY) Cyrus Vance announced the launch of a \$7.3 million, five-year initiative involving seven college programs operating in 17 New York prisons. In addition to supporting programs themselves, the DANY initiative will promote best practices and better coordination across programs, and develop comprehensive academic reentry services to bolster degree completion once students are released from prison (Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (CJII), 2017).<sup>4</sup> On the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice in 2016 jointly launched the Second Chance Pell pilot program, a three-year experiment with 69 selected colleges and universities across the U.S. to test the reinstatement of Pell funding for people who are taking college courses while incarcerated. Eight colleges in New York received Second Chance Pell grant awards (U.S. DOE, 2016, Vera Institute of Justice, 2017 c). In February 2018, Senator Lamar Alexander, chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, with bipartisan support, announced that committee would consider reinstating Pell grant eligibility to incarcerated people as part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. In short, there is considerable momentum behind higher education in prison programs.

## Purpose of the Report

This report is intended to help state and local policymakers, advocates, and the general public consider the landscape of college education programs in prison and offer suggestions to promote a more comprehensive and integrated system of in-prison college providers and DOCCS. The report describes the two systems – higher education and corrections – that are often perceived as distinct, yet come together to provide access to college education for incarcerated people. We look at the challenges in meshing these two systems, how corrections, college staff, and students work to overcome challenges, and propose next steps to build on the strong foundation already achieved across the state.

## A Note on Method

The information presented in this report is based on a review of relevant documents, including DOCCS policies and college program materials; quantitative data analysis on general DOCCS population; surveys of incarcerated students; and face-to-face interviews with college program staff, DOCCS Central Office staff, and facility educational staff. We also conducted in-person observations of classrooms and resource areas to learn about the experiences and daily operation of prison-based higher education programs. Data collection took place during the spring and summer of 2017 during which time we looked at both the classroom experience and assets, such as technology, library resources, and classroom space. Site visits provided valuable insight into the relationship between various levels of DOCCS personnel and higher education programs.

The survey was distributed to 1,274 college students enrolled in 24 of the 25 New York State correctional facilities with a college program.<sup>5</sup> Based on an agreement with DOCCS, these surveys were distributed and collected by DOCCS Education Supervisors. To protect confidentiality of all respondents, students were asked not to identify themselves, their current college program, or the prison in which they were incarcerated. We gathered information about the region from which the incarcerated person was committed based on a coding scheme we developed when we sent out the surveys. We did this to ensure responses from people who resided in various parts of the state prior to their sentence.

The survey included questions about student demographic characteristics, educational and employment background, reflections on the higher education courses they have taken while incarcerated, level of satisfaction with

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<sup>4</sup> DANY CJII funds this college work as well as other innovative public safety projects using criminal asset forfeiture funds.

<sup>5</sup> The college programs in the remaining facility were not able to participate due to programmatic transitions taking place during the time of this survey.

available resources, and academic and personal growth resulting from their experience with college while incarcerated. The survey consisted of multiple choice questions and open-ended questions to elicit a deeper understanding about their personal journeys of becoming college students, what they perceive to be the benefits and challenges of taking college classes while incarcerated, how they define academic success, and their recommendations for enhancing correctional-based college programs.

Survey respondents included students taking face-to-face college courses (including credited courses and pre-college courses). A small number of surveys were completed by students taking correspondence courses. In total, 341 students voluntarily completed surveys, representing a 27 percent overall response rate.<sup>6</sup> The results of the survey are summarized in Chapter IV.

The surveys allowed us to obtain candid feedback from those taking college-level coursework during their incarceration. Incarcerated college students are uniquely positioned to provide insight about their experiences as students and to offer suggestions to help shape future correctional-based, higher-education programming. The survey of students, along with data provided by DOCCS, provide a description of the incarcerated student population and an understanding of their pathways, experiences in college-in-prison programs, and future aspirations regarding continued higher education.

In addition to the surveys of the incarcerated students, we also undertook face-to-face and phone interviews with college program administrators, DOCCS education staff and other key officials, along with site visits to college-in-prison programs. We conducted site visits to 23 of the 25 prisons with active programs in the spring and summer of 2017. We also conducted interviews with DOCCS education staff or other DOCCS administrators with significant experience related to the college programs.

Interview respondents signed informed consent and agreed to voluntarily and confidentially share their experience and opinions about higher education in prison. Obtaining information confidentially allowed respondents to speak openly. For this reason, sources of information will not be identified by name, affiliated prisons, or names of higher education institutions.

Site observations were arranged with the college program administrator. Classroom observations were selected based on voluntary participation from the instructors and availability of schedules.

We used the data and information collected to offer suggestions on how to build a more integrated and comprehensive system that will maximize the number of people participating in higher education while incarcerated and improve access to a high-quality college experience during incarceration. We offer these suggestions within a framework that understands, as evident in their mission statements, that there are shared goals even between the vastly different systems of higher education and corrections. DOCCS emphasizes public safety and security and also expresses a commitment to improving life outcomes for incarcerated people. The mission of DOCCS is:

*To improve public safety by providing a continuity of appropriate treatment services in safe and secure facilities where all inmates' needs are addressed and they are prepared for release, followed by supportive services for all parolees under community supervision to facilitate a successful completion of their sentence.*

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<sup>6</sup> Surveys of incarcerated populations faced myriad challenges; low response rates among incarcerated populations are not uncommon. Challenges include concerns that the information will not be kept confidential and that there might be repercussions for opinions voiced in the survey. The surveys for this study were distributed and collected by the DOCCS Educational Supervisor at each facility, who in turn sent them to the Prisoner Reentry Institute. For further discussion about research with incarcerated populations see Trulson, Marquart & Mullings 2004; Fox, Zambrana & Lane 2011.

Colleges and universities prioritize the building of intellectual capital among citizens to be used in their pursuit of productive lives, characterized by family relations, employment, and civic engagement. The foundation of social and economic supports promotes desistance from crime. However, desistance from crime is also a matter of the way that individuals understand their community and how they define their communal responsibilities. Higher education contributes to both the material foundation and subjective understanding of an individual's place in society. Higher education develops critical thinking skills and self-awareness within a context of a broader understanding of the world beyond one's immediate experiences. It also develops a wide range of skills essential for employment. A person with the capacity to live a safe and productive life is better equipped to contribute to family and community well-being. New York's public university systems – the City University of New York (CUNY) and the State University of New York (SUNY) – have a fundamental goal of ensuring that a college education, which develops instrumental and conceptual skills, is accessible to the mosaic of communities that make up the state. In keeping with their mission to promote higher education among vulnerable populations, New York State's public universities offer the accessibility, affordability, and developmental education offerings that make them uniquely positioned to support incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students. CUNY founder, Townsend Harris, "called upon New York City to create a public academy of higher learning to 'educate the whole people.'"<sup>7</sup> In keeping with this tradition, CUNY's current mission states, in part:

*[T]he University will continue to maintain and expand its commitment to academic excellence and to the provision of equal access and opportunity for students, faculty, and staff from all ethnic and racial groups and from both sexes. The City University is of vital importance as a vehicle for the upward mobility of the disadvantaged in the City of New York.*<sup>8</sup>

More geographically dispersed than the CUNY system, SUNY is uniquely positioned to support incarcerated students and people returning to communities outside of the New York City metropolitan area. Similar to CUNY, SUNY is committed to supporting excellence in education with a focus on diversity in students served and academic offerings:

*The mission of the state university system shall be to provide to the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population in a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs including such additional activities in pursuit of these objectives as are necessary or customary.*<sup>9</sup>

## Why It Matters

Proponents of access to higher education for people with criminal histories often cite utilitarian reasons connected to the development of human capital and the value of college as a means for economic growth. Another key focus is public safety, notably the extent to which a college education reduces recidivism. Supporters who hold this position regularly connect the decline in recidivism to increased public safety and a reduction in spending on imprisonment. However, the value of access higher education stretches far beyond the cost-benefit analysis of reduced crime and correctional spending. The return on an investment in college-in-prison programs includes improved outcomes for individuals in the areas of health, civic engagement, and intergenerational poverty.

Higher education encompasses a broad range of courses and intellectual pursuits variously categorized as humanities, liberal arts, professional or career-focused, and science or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). In order to reap the full benefits of a college education, it is essential that students, whether incarcerated or not, have access to the broad range of subject matter. Humanities or liberal arts subjects have value even if not narrowly focused on a particular employment niche. In fact, humanities courses teach skills highly valued by employ-

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<sup>7</sup> City University of New York website: <http://www2.cuny.edu/about/history/>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> State University of New York website: <https://www.suny.edu/about/mission/>



ers: analytical reasoning, teamwork, information literacy, ethical judgment, decision-making, and communication skills. Finally, higher education has a benefit beyond the instrumental, by developing thoughtful, contributing, and tolerant citizens.

## Economic Benefits for Individuals and Society

A college education continues to have economic benefits to the individual and to society at large. Analyses by the Economic Policy Institute (2014) and the New York Times (Leonhard 2014) show a significant pay gap between individuals with college degrees and those without. The average wage of a college graduate was 98 percent higher than for non-graduates. College degrees are increasingly preferred for jobs that in the past did not require such a credential. A study of on-line job ads found that 50 percent of ads for manufacturing jobs, one-fifth of ads for office support workers, and even 11 percent of ads for food service workers required a bachelor's degree (Carnevale et al. 2014). The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce estimates that by 2020, 69 percent of jobs in New York State will require postsecondary education, slightly above the national average (Carnevale et al. 2013). A bachelor's degree is often an inflexible condition of employment; a survey of employers showed that two-thirds of those surveyed indicated that they never waive this educational requirement (Fischer 2013).

Economic benefits for individuals translate into larger social benefits. States with a better-educated population have a higher median income, and therefore a stronger tax base. Higher education provides the human capital to support innovation in multiple fields, such as business, technology, and health care. In general, a better-educated workforce increases productivity, and education is considered to be “smart economic development policy” (Berger & Fisher 2013). The Rockefeller Institute of Government (2011) estimated that the graduates from the SUNY system alone have the capacity to fill four out of 10 jobs in the state requiring a college degree. A college education for people in prison will strengthen their ability to compete in the marketplace and increase the pool of qualified candidates for jobs that are hard to fill.

Incarcerated people are an important source of human and social capital, and college-in-prison programs make important contributions in developing this potential. At a time when the mismatch between available jobs and relevant job skills have produced a lag in economic development, preparing incarcerated people to leave prison ready to fill some of these positions will benefit not only the individual, but the state economy as whole.

While there are regional and sector differences, there are thousands of jobs that go unfilled in New York State because of what is termed the “skills gap.” This is particularly true for what are called “middle-skilled jobs,” i.e., jobs that require post-secondary education, but not necessarily a college degree. According to the National Skills Coalition (2017), 50 percent of jobs in New York State fall into this category, but only 38 percent of the state's workers qualify for these jobs.

A survey of employers across the state conducted by the Public Policy Institute of New York, (affiliated with the Business Council of New York), identified the skills most needed by employers (Armour-Garb 2017). More than half of employers identified high or moderate difficulty finding prospective employees with adequate critical thinking, communications, and problem-solving skills: critical thinking skills, in fact, was the skill set most in demand. The report quotes Stanley Litow, IBM Vice President of Corporate Citizenship & Corporate Affairs and member of the SUNY Board of Trustees as stating, “We've had a misnomer for the last decade or more, referring to the job skills required across the labor force as ‘soft skills.’ These are not soft skills; they're essential skills – like writing, problem-solving, presentation skills. These are the flexible skills required in the workplace” (p. 7). In addition, the survey also found that employers considered community colleges as their most important partners in helping them close the skills gap.

An inclusive workforce development policy to developing human capital is an important part of the solution to closing this gap. There is a growing recognition that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people constitute an

important segment of underdeveloped human capital. For example, a report by the Community Service Society (CSS) and the Center for an Urban Future (CUF) identified formerly incarcerated people as among the groups that need to receive workforce development, including higher education, in order to meet the emerging needs of employers (Fischer & Reiss 2010). The CCS/CUF report specifically recommended the expansion of college-in-prison programs in New York State prisons.

Perhaps the clearest recognition of the value of formerly incarcerated people to the economic well-being of the New York State is found in the New York State Workforce and Opportunity Act's Four-Year Combined State Plan (2016-2019). The plan included the formerly incarcerated population as a focus for services in order to achieve the state's workforce development goals, and noted recommendations by the Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration.

## Public Safety: Reducing Recidivism

For many, a central component of the value of college-in-prison programs is the impact of higher education on recidivism. There is now a growing body of research and reporting that shows that people who attend college while in prison have dramatically lower recidivism rates than other formerly incarcerated people. It is important to note that there are multiple ways of measuring recidivism – rearrest, reconviction, and/or reincarceration. An oft-cited 2013 study by the RAND Corporation (Davis et al. 2013) found that, on average, people who participated in any form of correctional education programs while incarcerated had a 43 percent lower chance of returning to prison than those who did not. A research brief prepared by the Open Society Institute (1997) reported on a Texas study in which participation in higher education lowered recidivism to 15 percent, 13 percent, and less than 1 percent for people who earned an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, and a master's degree, respectively. Other state-level studies also showed significant impact on reducing recidivism including studies in Texas (Tracy & Johnson, 1994), California (Chase & Dickover 1983), Alabama, and Maryland (Stevens & Ward 1997).

Fortunately, there are data specific to New York State, all of which confirms the role of college-in-prison programs on reducing recidivism. Some of the earliest data on the impact of college participation in prisons was collected by DOCCS itself. The report, "Analysis of Return Rates of The Inmate College Program Participants" (Clark 1991), was based on a sample of males who participated in the Inmate College Program during the 1986-1987 academic year. The measure looked at was "return to DOCCS custody."<sup>10</sup> Data was collected on individuals who had been released for one year or more. The return rate for incarcerated men who earned a degree while in the Inmate College Program from 1986-1987 was significantly lower than the return rates for the general male population – 26 percent compared to 47 percent. The report concluded, "These findings suggest that earning a college degree while incarcerated is positively related to successful post-release adjustment as measured by return to the Department's custody."

DOCCS produced another report in 2015: "College Programming" that summarizes three-year, post-release recidivism rates (defined as return to DOCCS custody) for people released in 2009 who had earned a college degree while incarcerated. DOCCS data showed that only 13 percent of the 91 people who earned a degree while at DOCCS returned to DOCCS during the follow-up period 2010-2012. Of these, 2 percent were returned because of a new conviction; the remainder returned for parole violations (NYS DOCCS 2015).

A methodologically sophisticated study (Kim & Clark 2013) analyzed DOCCS "return to custody" data by creating a comparison sample that more closely matched the characteristics of incarcerated college students than the general population (e.g., demographic, mental health, criminal justice, and conviction characteristics). This allows for investigation about the impact of factors other than college attendance/completion on reduction of recidivism. The results of this study show that while the "treatment effect" of completing a college degree in prison is reduced

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<sup>10</sup> The study did not specify the reasons for return, i.e., conviction for a new crime or technical violation of parole.

when compared to a matched group, college still had a recidivism reduction effect. The treatment group – persons who completed college before release – had a recidivism rate of 9.4 percent compared to the 17.9 percent recidivism rate of the matched group. In short, similarly situated formerly incarcerated people are almost twice as likely to recidivate compared to people who completed a college degree. Further statistical analysis by the authors found that earning a college degree while in prison reduced the chance of recidivism by 50 percent. Kim and Clark concluded:

*In summary, we find that prison-based college education can effectively reduce recidivism. The different modeling approaches used in this study show consistently positive results. When an offender completes a prison-based college program while incarcerated, he or she would be significantly less likely to recidivate after release. Furthermore, those who earned a college degree while incarcerated stay crime-free in the community longer than those who did not participate in college programs (p. 203).*

Studies and information from specific college programs operating in New York State prisons show comparable, if not more promising results. A study of formerly incarcerated women who participated in the Bedford Hills College Program showed that women who participated in the program while in prison had a 7.7% return to custody rate, compared to all women released from prison between 1985 and 1995, who had a 29.9% return to custody rate (Fine et al. 2001). Of the college programs in New York State prisons that have been able to track post-release recidivism, the Bard Prison Initiative reports that only 2 percent of graduates and 4 percent of those who participated in the program returned to prison. The Hudson Link program also reports a recidivism rate of 4 percent.<sup>11</sup> There is also positive evidence from programs that serve formerly incarcerated people who choose to continue their higher educational pursuits in the community (Weissman et al. 2010). For example, College and Community Fellowship (CCF), an organization that helps women with criminal convictions earn college degrees, reports that over its 17-year history, less than 1 percent of their participants have been rearrested or returned to prison (College & Community Fellowship 2018). A study of 250 students between 2009 and 2010 who worked with College Initiative, a program that supports justice-involved students in pursuing higher education, found the recidivism rate for students who had enrolled in at least one semester of college to be 3 percent (Sturm, Skolnick & Wu 2010).

The people of New York State reap the benefits of higher education through its impact on recidivism in multiple ways. Fewer people returning to prison means fewer taxpayer dollars that have to be spent on incarceration – a far greater expense than the cost of college-in-prison programs or college tuition in the community. The per-student cost of college-in-prison programs is about \$5,000 per year. The average cost per-student for a SUNY four-year college is \$6,670 per year, for a SUNY community college is \$4,520 (SUNY 2018) per year, and for a four-year CUNY is \$6,530 (CUNY 2018) per year. In contrast, the cost for DOCCS to incarcerate someone for one year is \$69,355 (Vera Institute of Justice 2018).

Most importantly, lower recidivism rates mean greater public safety, which makes for less harm and improved quality of life in communities throughout the state.

## **Family and Community Benefits**

Providing access to higher education to people in prison also positions them to be better parents and role models for their children even while incarcerated. Once released, formerly incarcerated people who attended college will be better equipped to obtain employment at higher wages, encourage their children to achieve higher levels of education, and in general be more informed parents with respect to health and general family well-being (Human Impact Partners 2015; Fine et al. 2001).

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<sup>11</sup> These data are typically available from material produced by the various college programs. See for example, <https://bpi.bard.edu/by-the-numbers/>; Hudson Link says actually 2% in 2018 - <http://www.hudsonlink.org/hudsonlink-wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Hudson-Link-Fact-Sheet-72018.pdf>

There are also racial equity issues addressed by providing incarcerated people the opportunity to access higher education. The tragic, but undeniable truth is that people of color are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and underrepresented in higher education. Black and Latino people are 36 percent of the total state population, 34 percent of the students enrolled in colleges in the state (24% of SUNY students; 57% CUNY) but make up 73 percent of the prison population. Making college possible in prison increases prospects for enrollment in the community, particularly SUNY and CUNY schools whose missions include expanding access to higher education for marginalized populations.

## Education to Preserve a Democratic Society

While support for college education in prison is most often grounded in its impact on recidivism, there are equally important reasons for ensuring postsecondary educational opportunities for incarcerated students. Higher education, whether for incarcerated students or students in the community, develops critical thinking skills that connect people to the world in expansive ways and contributes to their ability to be thoughtful, participatory citizens.

In 1946, President Harry Truman created The President's Commission on Higher Education. His actions were motivated in large part by an interest in considering the role of higher education in preserving the democratic principles of the United States. The creation of the Commission was prompted by the experience of World War II – the rise of fascism, atrocities, and the new world order that emerged in the aftermath of the war. Part of that new world was the realization and appreciation of an increasingly diverse society. The Commission was strong in its belief that an educated citizenry was a critical antidote to anti-democratic values. Both considerations are captured in the Commission's statement:

*Equal opportunity for all persons, to the maximum of their individual abilities and without regard to economic status, race, creed, color, sex, national origin, or ancestry is a major goal of American democracy. Only an informed, thoughtful, tolerant people can develop and maintain a free society (Zook 1947).*

Research has documented the relationship between higher education and United States' democratic political system, including the development of a better-informed citizenry and higher rates of voting (Dee 2004; Milligan et al. 2004; Helliwel & Putnam 2007). This is especially relevant as more and more states, including New York, are re-enfranchising people on parole.<sup>12</sup> Higher education equips citizens with the ability to make knowledge-based choices about leadership and understand the political issues of the day. A well-educated citizenry is better able to set standards for their elected leaders, including checks on excess of power and corruption. Dee (2004) found that higher education increases rates of voter registration and voter participation, readership of newspapers to remain informed about current affairs, and higher rates of support for free speech, all essential components for maintaining a functioning democratic society.

Critical thinking skills are transformational and change a person's understanding of him/herself and responsibilities in the world. This is made clear by the voices of incarcerated people who have had the opportunity to attend college while incarcerated. They speak of taking responsibility for their behavior in profound ways. One woman interviewed for the Changing Minds study (Fine et al. 2001) said, "[College creates] a lot of self-reflection. [I recognize] the pain of being separated from my family, of knowing that I hurt others from my actions" (p.26). Johnny Page<sup>13</sup> writes the following about his awakening that resulted from attending college while incarcerated,

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<sup>12</sup> "Governor Cuomo Signs Executive Order to Restore Voting Rights to New Yorkers on Parole" <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-signs-executive-order-restore-voting-rights-new-yorkers-parole>

<sup>13</sup> Johnny Page attended the Educational Justice Project, a college-in-prison program of the University of Illinois at Urbana. The program operates out of Danville Prison. Mr. Page was released in October 2014 after serving 23 years in prison. While in prison, he earned 30 credit hours from the University of Illinois and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in the community. Mr. Page is now a graduate student at Northeastern Illinois University.

*Upon becoming conscious, I could no longer walk the path that I had previously traveled. Wearing these newly acquired lenses, I began to examine the society in which I was educated. I could no longer willingly or unwillingly live in a box, and exposure to the liberal arts was the catalyst. I remember sitting in a rhetoric class some sixteen years ago, some five years after my first academic course, when the instructor asked why education was important to me, and my response was that I wanted to ensure that I was never again a prisoner of the cave ... I have increased my consciousness, which has allowed/forced me to challenge my thinking and how I perceive the world and my place within it today.*

Comments like these explain why higher education, whether in prison or in the community, is important; college exposes people to new worlds, and helps prepare them for meaningful employment and for citizenship. Crime prevention/recidivism reduction is a logical outcome – but not the sole benefit – of increased civic engagement and social mobility.

In short, access to higher education for marginalized and vulnerable populations is an essential responsibility to improve outcomes for all citizens. New York State has built a strong foundation for this critical endeavor.

## **Mapping the Landscape**

This report is intended to help policymakers including those working in corrections and higher education understand the landscape of college programs currently operating in state prisons – who is offering programs, who attends, as well as the challenges and opportunities that arise as a result of this effort. Chapter II describes the two diverse systems that collaborate to bring higher education into prisons – the scope of higher education in New York State that includes public and private institutions and the state’s criminal justice system, notably DOCCS. Chapter III looks at this history of higher education in prisons as well as the current landscape – which colleges are delivering college courses and in what prisons. We also summarize the characteristics of the student body in these college-in-prison programs. Chapter IV explores insights from key stakeholders drawn from surveys, interviews, and site observations. Chapter V concludes this report by considering what opportunities exist to advance the work of higher education programs in New York State prisons, and specifically to create a coordinated and integrated system of effective, accessible programs that will advance safety, prosperity, and a stronger democracy.

## II. Fundamentals of Higher Education and Criminal Justice in New York State

To understand college in prison requires some knowledge of both the systems of higher education and of corrections. They are very different systems in almost every respect: mission, purpose, staffing, structure, and overall environment. Most obviously, there are different pathways into these systems. Obtaining higher education is an aspiration, a goal that one chooses for oneself, strives to achieve, and volunteers to enter usually with great joy and pride. Prisons are involuntary institutions that draw in people due to a combination of individual behaviors and structural forces in the larger society. In New York State, however, there are examples of how the tensions inherent in the social construction of these enterprises can be mitigated. At this writing, there are 15 college programs involving over 30 institutions of higher education serving about 1,100 incarcerated people in 25 prisons. Those directly involved in the endeavor to provide college courses inside prisons – DOCCS officials, college administration and staff, and the incarcerated students themselves – place high value on these initiatives. Moreover, policymakers, law enforcement, and the public, are coming to appreciate the wide-ranging benefits of college-in-prison programs.

The populations that comprise college campuses and correctional institutions reflect the different pathways people take into the institutions. Prisons are populated by the most marginalized in our society, and disproportionately by people of color and the economically disadvantaged. Incarcerated people in New York State, as is true nationally, are poorer and less well educated than the general population. According to the census data from 2017, of the 19,849,399 people who reside in New York State, 70 percent are white, 18 percent are black/African American, 19 percent are Latino/Hispanic and nine percent are Asian. Eighty-six percent of New Yorkers have a high school diploma and 35 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. While colleges in New York State are becoming more accessible to people of different class, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, they remain bastions of the more privileged. Of the roughly 1,167,000<sup>14</sup>, students who enrolled in college in New York in 2016 (public/private/two/four-year), more than half (52%) were white, 15 percent black/African American, 19 percent were Hispanic/Latino and 10 percent Asian. The remaining racial/ethnic groups represented collectively made up less than one percent (Snyder 2017, Table 306.50).

Virtually all people who enroll in college have high school diplomas. According to research by the Pew Institute (DeSilver 2014), 51 percent of low-income students with a high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED) enrolled in college, compared to 65 percent of middle-income students, and 81 percent high-income students<sup>15</sup> with a high school diploma, GED, or the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC™)/High School Equivalency Diploma (HSE).<sup>16</sup>

The differences among the New York State college population and the DOCCS population could be stark: the 2016 population of DOCCS was 25 percent white, 48 percent black/African American and 24 percent Hispanic/Latino (NYS DOCCS 2016 a). Forty-one percent of people incarcerated in a DOCCS facility do not have a high school diploma. National data (Rabuy & Kopf 2015) show the incarcerated population to be “dramatically concentrated at the lowest ends of the national income distribution” with a median annual income prior to their incarceration of \$19,185, which is 41 percent lower than non-incarcerated people of similar ages. Various studies have shown that the majority of incarcerated people in New York State prisons come from the poorest neighborhoods of New York City and other upstate urban areas.

College-in-prison programs are a remarkable effort to bridge these seemingly enormous differences in college access and attendance. In order to understand how these two very diverse systems interact to offer higher education inside of prisons, we first present a basic description of their individual operations and structure.

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<sup>14</sup> This total does not include non-resident alien enrollees.

<sup>15</sup> The PEW study relied on National Center for Educational Statistics definition of income: “low income” is the bottom 20% of all family incomes, “high income” as the top 20%, and “middle income” as the 60% in between.

<sup>16</sup> In 2014, New York State replaced the GED exam with the TASC™ test for High School Equivalency testing. This is now the exam given in DOCCS facilities. However, some incarcerated people have a GED from prior years.

## Higher Education in New York State

The history of higher education in New York State is long, proud, and diverse, dating back to pre-revolutionary days. Kings College, which was renamed Columbia University after the revolution, was founded in 1754. The University of the State of New York, the governing body for all public and private educational institutions in the state, was established in 1784 under the first New York State Constitution. New York City's Free Academy (subsequently City University), founded in 1847, was the first free public college in the United States. In 1834, the St. Lawrence Academy, which today is known as State University of New York (SUNY) at Potsdam, became the first college to receive financial support from New York State (Subramanian & Cayey 2012).<sup>17</sup> About a century later, the two public higher education systems in the state were more officially organized: 1948 for SUNY and 1961 for the City University of New York (CUNY). This entirety of higher education is governed by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. Both SUNY and CUNY have their own Boards of Trustees as do private colleges.

As public institutions, CUNY and SUNY have similar missions: both commit to an explicit goal of making high quality higher education accessible to all segments of the population. Public systems, like SUNY and CUNY, offer opportunities for higher education to all individuals, regardless of their background or economic status (Bastedo & Gumpert 2003). In its mission statement, CUNY specifically includes its role in facilitating upward mobility of disadvantaged people from New York City, and SUNY explicitly notes its goal to serve traditional and nontraditional students. These public systems essentially open doors to higher education for groups who were historically excluded from private education due to religion, ethnicity, and race as well as class status. CUNY, for example, was regarded as the Harvard the working class (Leonhardt 2017). SUNY's founders also recognized that higher education played an important role in strengthening civic engagement and democratic institutions (Henderson & Cowan 1948; Eurich 1950).

## Colleges & Universities in New York

The system of higher education in New York is comprised of more than 300 colleges and universities, primarily public and private non-profit institutions. As of 2016, there were over 1.2 million students enrolled in colleges and universities in the state, of whom 37 percent were enrolled in private, not-for-profit colleges and universities, 36 percent were enrolled in SUNY schools, and 22 percent were CUNY students. A small number of students – 3 percent – were registered in proprietary (for-profit) schools.<sup>18</sup>

## The City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY is the largest public urban university system in the country and the third largest public system, surpassed only by the New York and California state systems. CUNY has 24 campuses including seven community colleges, eleven senior colleges that offer baccalaureate degrees, as well as graduate centers, graduate programs, and professional schools. The total enrollment in 2017 was 272,957; 35 percent were enrolled in CUNY community colleges.

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<sup>17</sup> The funding was to support a teacher education program.

<sup>18</sup> We do not address for-profit schools as they play no role in the delivery of college courses in New York State prisons. Propriety colleges do market to the formerly incarcerated population stressing that they do not inquire about criminal history backgrounds unlike many public and not for profit colleges, particularly those that rely on the Common Application (Weissman et al. 2010; The Financial Clinic 2014). We note that as of August 2019, the Common Application will no longer include questions about criminal records, but as of this writing, the question remains.

**FIGURE 1: Map of CUNY College Campuses, 2017**



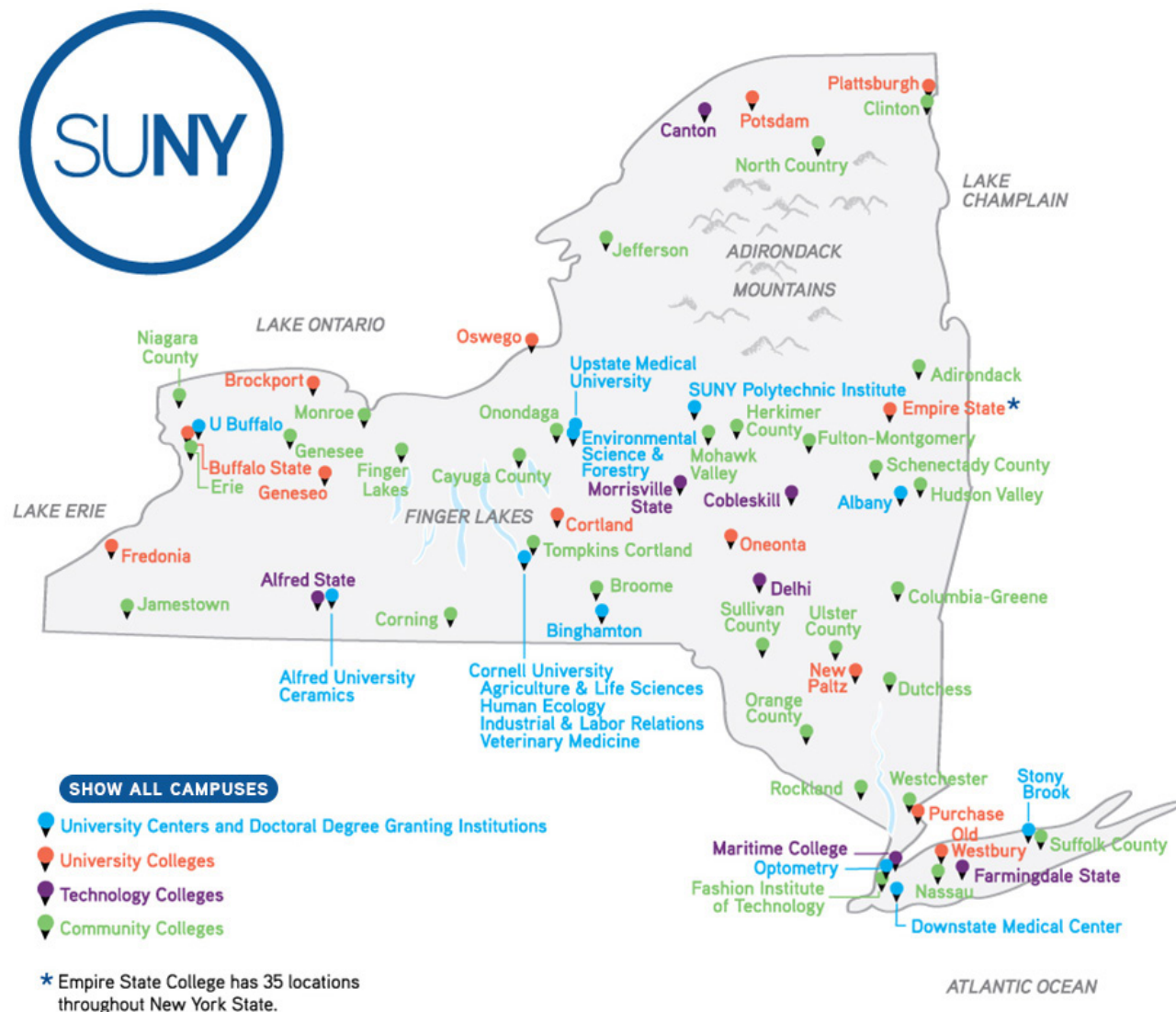
Source of Image: The City University of New York, University Viewbook 2017, <http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/admissions/undergraduate/downloads/CUNY-Viewbook-2017.pdf>

### The State University of New York (SUNY)

Sixty-four colleges and universities make up the SUNY system with campuses spread throughout New York State. As of September 2017, there were 431,855 students enrolled in campus programs and additional individuals enrolled in continuing educational classes. Forty-eight percent of students were enrolled in county-based community colleges, and 52 percent were enrolled in four-year colleges directly operated by SUNY. SUNY is the largest public university system in the United States.



FIGURE 2: Map of SUNY College Campuses, 2018



Source of Image: The State University of New York, <http://www.suny.edu/careers/employment/map.cfm>

### A Note: The Special Role of CUNY and SUNY Community Colleges

Interest in linking post-secondary education to vocational pursuits, in ways that were distinct from four-year institutions, dates back to the mid-1800s. The Morrill Act of 1862 is considered the foundation of community colleges. In the 20th century, the appeal of community colleges was largely driven by workforce and economic goals; the rapidly industrializing country needed a workforce that was trained and skilled in the technologies of the day. While meeting the needs of (local) employers remains a core focus of community colleges, by the late 1960s, demographic changes and social justice concerns also played a role in shaping community colleges. As graduation from high school became the norm, the expectation of continuing on to college also grew. High school graduation rates rose from 30 percent in the 1920s to 75 percent in 1960. Five percent of high school graduates entered college in 1910 compared to 45 percent in 1960. A shifting American culture that extended adolescence, and delayed work and other adult responsibilities, translated into a growing number of young people who wanted to go to college.<sup>19</sup> Community colleges were increasingly relied upon to meet the growing demand for higher education. By the close of the 1960s,

<sup>19</sup> The ability to postpone assumption of adult responsibilities was not equally accessible to all young Americans but varied by class and associated racial and ethnic status.

the demand for college was such that Congress, facing pressure to help lower-income students have the ability to access higher education, opted to expand the community college system rather than expand financial aid that could increase access to “elite” universities (Brint & Karabel 1972; Karen 1991).

Today, community colleges, as open access institutions,<sup>20</sup> are critical to the national and state agenda of closing the socio-economic inequality gap by increasing college access to and degree completion of underserved populations. As the concept of lifelong learning has been embraced, underserved and nontraditional students including racial and ethnic minorities, working class and second-career students, single parents, veterans, first-generation students, immigrants, and students with disabilities increasingly find their higher education “home” at community colleges (Ma & Baum, 2016). Tuition at community colleges is more affordable: the average in-state tuition for a full-time student at community college is \$4,520 per year compared to \$6,670 at a SUNY four-year school. The cost for a CUNY four-year institution is comparable at \$6,530 per year, and tuition at a CUNY community college is \$4,500.

There are mutual benefits for incarcerated students and community colleges that are possible through DOCCS-college collaboration. Regional variations notwithstanding, enrollment in community colleges rose overall between 2006 and 2010 and then declined after that time. CUNY community colleges have been less affected: freshman enrollment in 2006 was 10,144 and rose to 16,424 in 2010. Changes since then have been modest – in 2016, the CUNY community college enrollment stood at 16,570. Community college that are part of the SUNY system also grew from 35,636 (freshman enrollment) in 2006 to 44,899 in 2010, but enrollment has been declining since that time to the 2016 low of 34,608 (Center for an Urban Future 2017). From the vantage point of community college admissions, incarcerated people can be an important opportunity to grow enrollment.

The structure of community college education, i.e., 30 county-based community colleges outside New York City and seven CUNY community colleges, is responsive to the higher educational needs of many incarcerated people. Completion of an associate degree may be more achievable for incarcerated students, and where this is not possible, there are community colleges throughout the state where people can complete their degree once released.<sup>21</sup>

## Private, Not-for-Profit Colleges and Universities

New York State’s higher education system is also distinct in its number of private, not-for-profit institutions.<sup>22</sup> According to the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (2018), New York has the largest private higher education sector of all the states. There are 147 private colleges and universities in New York, more than CUNY and SUNY colleges combined. There is significant variation in annual tuition in private colleges. The median cost is \$25,596 per year; the most expensive private colleges in New York State have annual tuitions of nearly \$60,000 per year, whereas the less expensive private colleges can cost less than \$20,000 per year (2017-18 figures) (CollCalc 2018).

Private, not-for-profit colleges and universities have a long history of providing college access to incarcerated students. In fact, during the more than two decades that Pell grant eligibility was denied to people in prison, private institutions were instrumental in maintaining the small cadre of college students who continued to be served in state prison. These programs include the Bedford Hills College Program, led by Marymount Manhattan College and initiated by incarcerated women; Bard Prison Initiative; and the New York Theological Seminary master’s program.

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<sup>20</sup> Open access institutions are those that admit all applicants and offer coursework commensurate with their academic needs to prepare them for college-level courses.

<sup>21</sup> This possibility for degree completion has been made more possible for formerly incarcerated people as the SUNY system eliminated questions about criminal history from its admissions application effective July 2017 and the CUNY system never so inquired.

<sup>22</sup> We will refer to private, not-for-profit colleges simply as private colleges.

## Proprietary Colleges and On-Line Colleges

Proprietary colleges are those that are run by private companies. As such, the missions of these schools include profitability for their shareholders as well as educational purposes. According to the New York State Education Department, Office of College and University Evaluation, there are 40 proprietary colleges in New York State. Until 2018, proprietary colleges were not eligible to receive tuition from New York State scholarships. However, this changed with the passage of the FY 19 budget which allows proprietary colleges to receive the State's Enhanced Tuition awards.

There is little systematic information about private, for-profit colleges in the state. To the extent that these enterprises offer correspondence courses, it is possible that there are incarcerated people who are enrolled in these schools. At this time, proprietary colleges do not deliver face-to-face higher education courses inside of DOCCS facilities and thus are not considered in this report. We also do not consider on-line colleges (whether offered through public, not-for-profit, or propriety institutions) as incarcerated students do not have access to the internet.

## Criminal Justice System in New York State

### Components and Structure

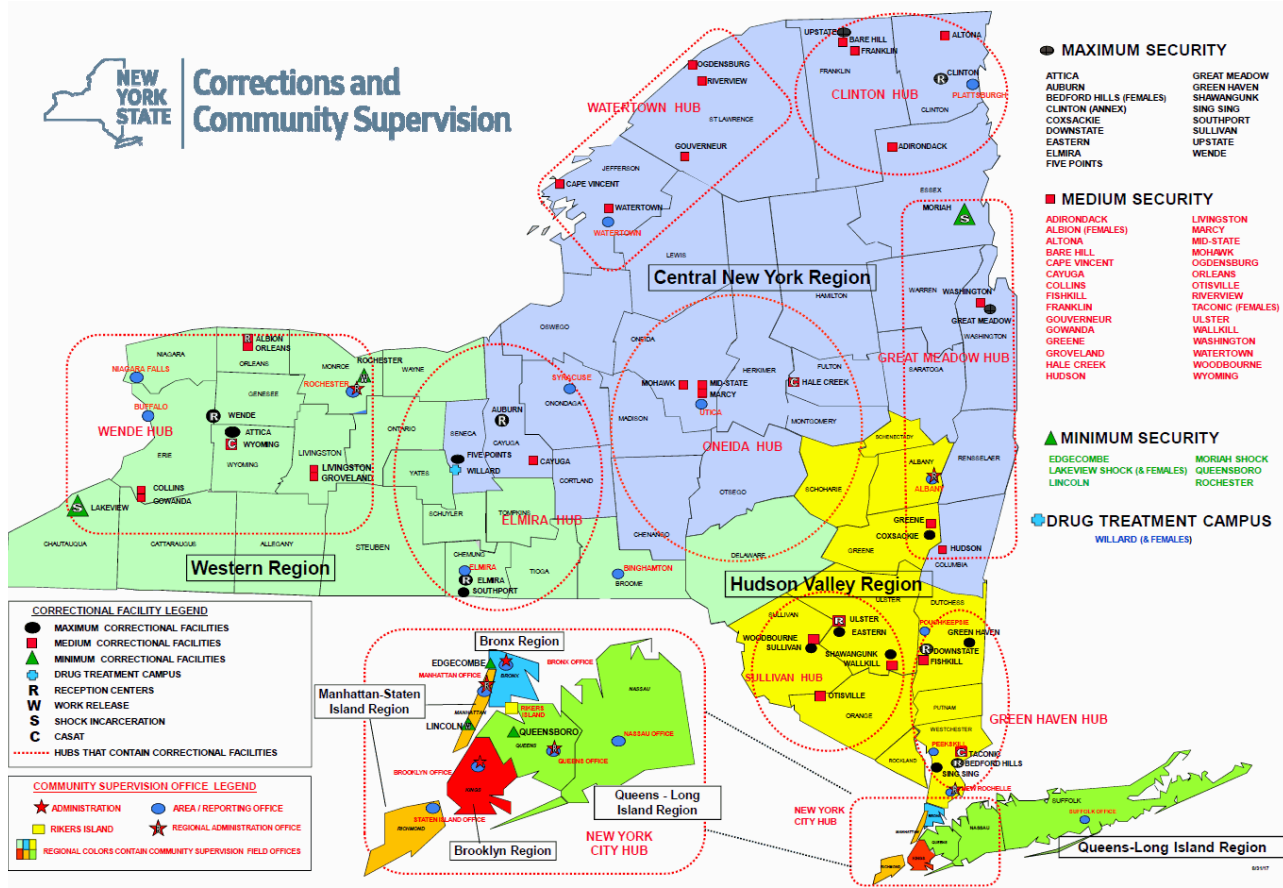
The New York State criminal justice system is quite complex, with many component parts and authority shared between state and local jurisdictions. Law enforcement (police), courts (judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys), and corrections (probation, local jails, state prisons, and parole) make up the criminal justice system and have overlapping, but distinct roles and responsibilities.

The routes into the criminal justice system are notably different than the pathways into college. Unlike the road to college, entry into the criminal justice system is involuntary with a damaging impact on family left behind. Entry into the system starts with arrest by police, proceeds into the court system through prosecution and, if convicted, results in the imposition of the sentence by a judge. Sentence options in New York State can be noncustodial (probation or alternative-to-incarceration), jail, or prison, depending on the nature of the crime and criminal history.

### New York State Prisons

In this report, we focus primarily on one specific part of the criminal justice system – the New York State prison system. State prisons, also called correctional facilities, are run by DOCCS, an executive agency led by a Commissioner, appointed by the Governor with the confirmation of the State Senate. The first prison in New York, Newgate Prison, was established in 1797 and located in New York City. Newgate eventually closed and was replaced by Auburn Prison, which opened in 1817. For a long period of time, the number of prisons expanded at a relatively slow rate; by 1972, there were 18 prisons operating in New York State. The tremendous growth of facilities took place in the 1980s and 1990s and at its peak, the State had 67 prisons. Declining rates of crime, reforms to the State's drug laws, and availability of alternative-to-incarceration programs led to a reduction in the prison population, and between 2009 and 2017, fourteen prisons were closed. Today, there are 53 prisons in New York State, classified by security level – maximum, medium and minimum. Seventeen are maximum security, 30 are medium security facilities, and six are minimum security. Most prisons are located in Northern, Western and Central New York.

**FIGURE 3: Map of DOCCS Facilities, 2018**



Source of Image: NYS DOCCS, <http://www.doccs.ny.gov/mapselec.html>

State prisons hold people who have been convicted of a felony-level offense and are sentenced to more than one year of incarceration.<sup>23</sup> Sentences to state prisons can be either indeterminate or determinate. An indeterminate sentence is characterized by court-established minimum and maximum terms of incarceration. The length of sentence is affected by a number of factors, including: type of crime, classification of the crime, and prior criminal history.<sup>24</sup> A determinate sentence is one in which the sentence is a fixed amount of time. As is discussed below in the section on release, the type of sentence determines the type of release an incarcerated person is eligible for.

As noted above, DOCCS is an executive agency headed by a Commissioner, appointed by the Governor and approved by the New York State Senate. There is a Deputy Commissioner for Programs who oversees rehabilitative programs including college-in-prison programs and an Education Supervisor who is specifically responsible for educational activities in DOCCS facilities. Day-to-day operations of individual prisons are the responsibility of the Superintendent (the equivalent of a Warden) of each facility who is appointed by the Commissioner. Each prison has a Deputy Superintendent of Programs who oversees therapeutic and educational programs in the facility. The Education Supervisor in each facility oversees all of the educational activities in the prison. This includes not only college-in-prison programs, but high school equivalency classes, adult basic education, and myriad volunteer groups that provide workshops on various topics offered to the incarcerated population. The Offender Rehabilitation Coordinator (ORC) plays a key role with incarcerated people beyond their initial assessment. ORCs' responsibilities include

<sup>23</sup> People who are convicted of [low-level] felonies or misdemeanors and sentenced to up to one year of incarceration are imprisoned in local county jails.

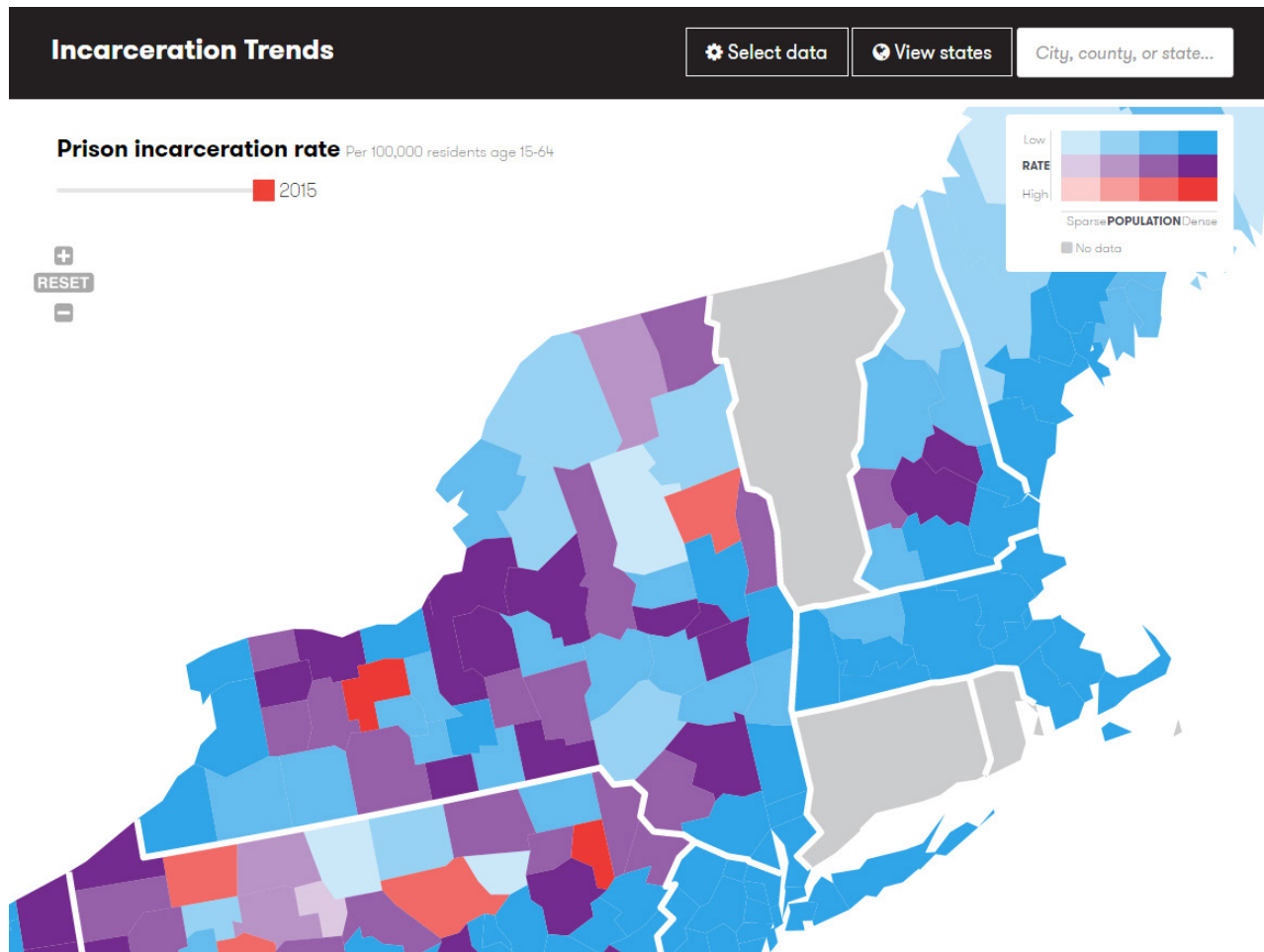
<sup>24</sup> New York classifies felonies from E to A, with A being the most serious. People with a second felony conviction are considered "predicate felony offenders," a classification that has sentencing implications. Felony crimes are also categorized as violent or nonviolent.

assisting people with adjustment to the facility, identifying and connecting with program options, understanding what will affect their release, and helping people prepare for their Board of Parole appearance(s) and develop release plans.

There are now about 50,000 people incarcerated in New York State prisons, a 31 percent decline from the 1999 peak of 72,649. The demographic characteristics of the incarcerated population show that a disproportionate number are people of color. As noted, New York State's prison population is 75 percent people of color, with the great majority coming from urban centers of the state. While New York City is the greatest single source of prison commitments, it has also seen the greatest decline in commitments in recent years. The number of people committed from upstate New York jurisdictions now exceeds those from New York City. In 2016, 43 percent of the state's prison population was from New York City while 46 percent were from upstate New York, primarily the cities of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany. These upstate cities have much in common with each other and with the poorest neighborhoods in New York City – poverty that is concentrated by geography and race. However, unlike the five boroughs/counties of New York City, the upstate cities/counties are not contiguous but rather separated by considerable distance and not connected by public transportation.

Once released, the majority of people return to their home communities. Among individuals under DOCCS custody as of January 1, 2017, the average time served was 61.6 months, but the median was considerably less – 25.7 months (NYS DOCCS 2017). Nevertheless, over one-third of those under DOCCS custody are serving minimum sentences of at least 10 years, and over one-sixth are serving minimum sentences of at least 20 years (NYS DOCCS 2016). These individuals with longer sentences are often the most involved in college-in-prison programs. With respect to education, the salient concern of this report, under-education is a particular problem among incarcerated people nationally, and New York State is no exception. Yet about 60 percent of people incarcerated in New York have completed high school (or equivalent), which is one of the fundamental requirements for post-secondary education.

**FIGURE 4: Prison Incarceration Trends in New York, Shifting Pockets of High Rates, 2015**



Prison incarceration rate (by county) per 100,000 residents in 2015: New York City: 132.1; Onondaga County (Syracuse): 244.5; Albany County: 317.2.

Source of Image: Vera Institute of Justice, Incarceration Trends. View the interactive map and additional counties here: <http://trends.vera.org/prisons>.

Most people released from state prison are placed on parole or post-release supervision. In 2011, the Division of Parole became part of DOCCS. Now referred to as Community Supervision, it has jurisdiction over both types of supervision. The nature of supervision is similar whether people are on parole or under post-release supervision, i.e., both have reporting requirements and conditions that must be adhered to (e.g., participation in substance use treatment, employment, or vocational training). The differences between the two are related to which criminal justice authority imposes the requirements and the term of services and consequences of violations of terms of release. The Parole Board is responsible for granting parole release for people serving indeterminate sentences. People on parole then can serve the remainder of their sentence in the community under the supervision of a parole officer. People may be granted early termination of parole for positive compliance while under supervision. People on parole may also face violation of their parole status if they do not adhere to their terms, and can be re-incarcerated for whatever time remains on their original sentence.

In contrast, in cases that are governed by determinate sentencing laws, post-release supervision requirements are imposed by the judge at time of the original sentencing. The length of post-release supervision ranges between one and five years, depending on the classification of the crime and prior criminal history. If someone violates the terms of post-release supervision, they face incarceration, the length of which is determined by when/how they were released. Passage through Prison

Prisons are organizations with lines of authority, operational rules and regulations, and management issues typical of “total institutions” (Goffman 1961). But prisons are also where people live their lives.

Typically, incarcerated people enter the state prison system after being held in the local jail in the county in which they were convicted. The first stop is one of the Reception Center facilities where the incarcerated person is screened/assessed for health and mental health conditions, provided with information on the Prison Rape Elimination Act and DOCCS rules and regulations, assigned a Department Identification Number (DIN), and processed through various security procedures (e.g., fingerprinting). During intake, the incarcerated person meets with an Offender Rehabilitation Coordinator (ORC) who reviews past justice system involvement, substance use issues, education level, program requirements, and other considerations that are used by DOCCS to determine the individual’s classification and assignment to a state prison.

Once the individual arrives at his or her assigned facility, they are assigned to a housing area, depending on the security level of the prison. Incarcerated people are expected to participate in two activities/modules a day. These activities include interventions with a rehabilitative purpose such as anger management, substance use counseling, or employment in either a correctional industry (e.g., Corcraft furniture production) or a job related to prison maintenance (clerical, kitchen assignments, grounds keeping). Incarcerated people can receive an hourly wage for participation in programs; the hourly rate varies by type of activity from about 10 cents per hour to 33 cents per hour for facility assignment and more for correctional industry work (Prison Policy Initiative 2017). Typically, people in prison rely on this money to buy personal items at the commissary. Program participation, especially in required programs, impacts eligibility for early release programs and is considered by the Parole Board in determining release. The other daily activities are recreation and meals. In general, incarcerated people are locked into their cells or confined to dormitories when not engaged in any of the above activities.

It is the decision of each facility whether students get paid for participation in college courses. This determination is based on the number of available work assignments and number of work-appropriate people housed at each facility.<sup>25</sup> Adding college courses to individuals’ scheduled programming can be difficult if they must participate in two other modules a day to earn income.

As a person nears release, he or she participates in what is called Phase III of DOCCS Transitional Service Program. During this time, the incarcerated person establishes a portfolio of important documents and resources that will assist them in successful reentry.<sup>26</sup> Individuals may also be released through the Temporary Release Program. To be considered for Temporary Release, an incarcerated person must be within two years of release, achieve a qualifying score on a point rating system<sup>27</sup> and cannot have been convicted of a disqualifying crime.<sup>28</sup> Initiated in 1970 as a pilot program, the Temporary Release Program provides for a structured and gradual transition from prison to the community. The program was authorized by the State Legislature in 1972 and allows people to be transferred to a Temporary Release facility to engage in rehabilitation-related activities, such as work, education, volunteer, and religious activities. People on Temporary Release are still under the custody of DOCCS; they are not on parole or post-release supervision. As such, they can be immediately returned to the general population for any violations of the terms of temporary release. Currently, few people are granted Temporary Release, and those who are allowed into the program are generally on work release.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The Master Job Organization Table (MJOT) is a computerized listing of the work and program items available at each facilitation, in addition to the grade, shift, and number of assigned hours per week for each item.

<sup>26</sup> The program is divided into three Phases with Phase I focusing on helping individuals to adjust to life in prison and Phase I) addressing cognitive behavioral training. Additional information is available on the DOCCS website <http://www.doccs.ny.gov/ProgramServices/transitional.html#network>

<sup>27</sup> The point score system includes questions about criminal history (past misdemeanor, felony convictions, warrants, violations of probation or parole) and institutional behavior (program participation, discipline, any past temporary release record) (7 CRR-NY 1900).

<sup>28</sup> People convicted of a homicide or a sex-related crime are ineligible for Temporary Release. People who have been convicted of other specified violent felony offenses in Executive Order 9 are not automatically disqualified but do have to go through a special review even if they otherwise qualify.

<sup>29</sup> The most utilized type of release is work release, which accounted for 86 percent of all participants on Temporary Release in 2016. Only four incarcerated people even applied for educational release and none of the applications were approved (NYS DOCCS 2016 b). Overall, the number of people approved for Temporary Release has been steadily declining. At its peak in 1994, 27,937 individuals participated in the Temporary Release Program (Warth & Rosenthal 2009). In 2016, there were 1,244 people granted Temporary Release.

## Release to Community

As Jeremy Travis, the former president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, noted, the vast majority of incarcerated individuals eventually return to society (Travis 2005). In New York State, more than 20,000 people are released from prison each year. Release from prison is a process commonly referred to as reentry and occurs through several formal mechanisms, namely parole release, and release on community supervision. We briefly review each type of release and how incarcerated people qualify for them.

**Parole Board Release:** People sentenced to an indeterminate length of incarceration are eligible for Parole Board release consideration once they have reached their minimum term of incarceration. The parole process in New York changed as a result of a 2011 merger between DOCCS and the Division of Parole. Among the reforms was the requirement that the Parole Board consider the results of a risk and needs assessment known as COMPAS (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions). COMPAS is administered by a DOCCS ORC. As noted above, the ORC is also responsible for developing a plan for community supervision intended to “promote the rehabilitation of the [incarcerated person] and their successful and productive reentry and reintegration into society upon release” (N.Y. Corrections Law § 71-a) (McKinney 2011).

Under Executive Law § 259-c (4), the Board is required to incorporate risk and needs principles indicative of rehabilitation and likelihood of success on release. Parole release is not guaranteed: it is a decision made by the Parole Board based on review of a number of factors including, but not limited to the criminal record, behavior in prison including programming, and the score achieved on the COMPAS risk and needs assessment. The most recent publicly available data show that in 2015, 25 percent of people appearing before the Board for the first time were released (NYS DOCCS n/d). The number of people released by the Parole Board in 2016 was 5,169 (NYS DOCCS 2017). The number of people released by the Board has been decreasing as more incarcerated people are serving determinate sentences and are released upon completion of their sentence (see below).

People who are released by the Parole Board are placed under parole supervision with conditions for a period of time. In total, there are approximately 36,000 under parole supervision in New York State.

**Presumptive Release:** An incarcerated person serving an indeterminate sentence is eligible for presumptive release after their minimum sentence or earlier if they qualify for Merit Time (NYS DOCCS 2011). There are several factors that could disqualify someone from presumptive release, including crime of conviction<sup>30</sup> and negative disciplinary history. The DOCCS Commissioner or his designee is the releasing authority, not the Parole Board, is the releasing authority, but the Parole Board will set the conditions of release, that in turn will be supervised by a DOCCS Parole Officer. In 2016, there were 21 people released from DOCCS under Presumptive Release (NYS DOCCS 2017).

**Conditional Release (CR):** Incarcerated people who have served a certain proportion of their sentence – 6/7 of a determinate sentence or 2/3 of an indeterminate sentence – are automatically released from prison on that date, unless they have lost good time. Good time provisions allow incarcerated people to earn sentence reduction off of his or her maximum sentence for good institutional behavior. There were 14,296 conditional releases in 2016 (NYS DOCCS 2017). The Parole Board does not have discretion over conditional release; however, people with an indeterminate sentence who CR out of prison are subject to parole supervision similar to that required of people who are released by the Parole Board. People who CR out after serving a determinate sentence begin their period of post-release supervision, overseen by Community Supervision, which is part of DOCCS.

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<sup>30</sup> People convicted of the following offenses are not eligible for presumptive release, regardless of their institutional history: An A-1 felony offense, A Penal Law Sec. 70.02 violent felony offense, Manslaughter 2nd degree, Vehicular manslaughter 1st and 2nd degree, Criminal negligent homicide, Penal Law Article 130 or 263 offenses, Incest, a hate crime (Penal Law Article 485), Terrorism of the penal, act of terrorism (Penal Law Article 490), aggravated harassment of an employee by an incarcerated person, or any out of state conviction which has all the essential elements of the offenses listed above.

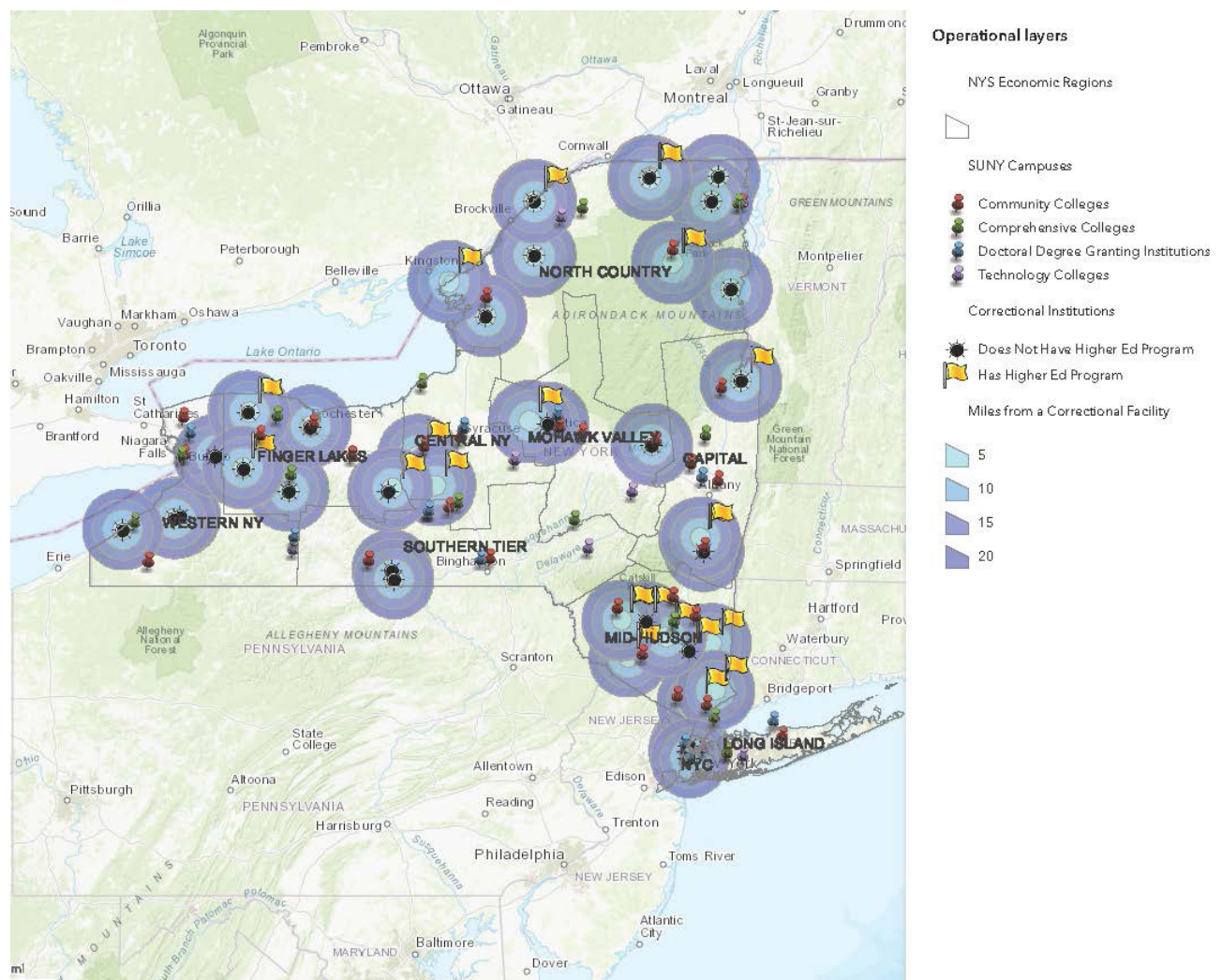


**Release to Supervision:** People serving determinate sentences, if not conditionally released, will be released at the end of their sentence (referred to as maxing out).<sup>31</sup> However, they are obligated to serve a period of post-release supervision that was imposed by the sentencing judge at the initial sentencing date. Post-release supervision generally lasts for a period of up to five years. As noted above, post-release supervision is the responsibility of the Community Supervision, a part of DOCCS.

## The Possible Synergy between Corrections and Higher Education

There are obvious differences between higher education and corrections in New York, but some important places for connections. Both systems are governed by state authorities, both systems have facilities spread throughout the state, and considerable authority is decentralized to the leadership of college presidents, chancellors, and DOCCS Superintendents. Finally, prisons and colleges are often in relatively proximate geographic locations as depicted in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5: Map of SUNY Campuses' Proximity to DOCCS Correctional Facilities, 2018**



Source of Image: The State University of New York, Prison Education Coordinator

View the interactive map here: <http://sunysystem.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=554fe08750d740258a86be8e5c184d66>

<sup>31</sup> In contrast, people who max out after serving an indeterminate sentence are not subject to parole or post-release supervision.

The Statewide Plan for Higher Education, developed every eight years by the Board of Regents, demonstrates ways that cooperation between higher education and corrections is relevant. The most recent 2012-2020 Statewide Plan for Higher Education focuses on five “topics of concern”: (1) strengthening the connections between higher education and P-12 education; (2) strengthening connections between higher education and the community; (3) strengthening connections between higher education and the State’s social and economic infrastructure; (4) improving access, quality, and performance of higher education; and (5) addressing out-of-state institutions’ interest in serving New Yorkers.

The first four of these concerns intersect with college-in-prison programs in several ways. The lack of college readiness, a statewide student problem, is certainly applicable to incarcerated people.<sup>32</sup> One of the major barriers to expanded access is the inability to provide sufficient college preparation to this group. Thousands of people who are incarcerated would be eligible for college (either in prison or upon release) if they were supported by pre-college programming. Currently, most college-in-prison programs report a significant need for preliminary remedial coursework for enrolled students. Less than half of these programs have capacity for developmental courses and there is only one non-profit organization operating in New York prisons dedicated to college readiness courses.<sup>33</sup>

College-in-prison programs are one way that the state’s higher education institutions strengthen their connection to the community and, at the same time, improve access to higher education, the fourth topic of concern identified in the Statewide Plan. Incarcerated students are more likely to be students of color and first-generation college students than the general college student population. College programs are reaching out to incarcerated people, who had little other chance of education, to offer curriculum and instructors. In several programs, campus-based students also take their classes in facilities alongside incarcerated students. Perhaps most importantly, colleges are offering incarcerated people an opportunity to experience positive human interactions and the ability to earn a valuable credential.

To the extent that college-in-prison programs improve employment prospects of incarcerated people once released, the programs also reflect the role of higher education as an engine of economic growth. The direct relationship between educational attainment and earning potential is well established. Higher education is a fundamental ingredient of social mobility.

While college-in-prison programs mesh with the Statewide Plan, they also reflect the concerns identified in the Plan. These include the need for more college preparation programs (noted above), and the need to ensure that college-in-prison programs can achieve performance goals such as academic quality and degree completion. The challenges facing prison-based college programs will be discussed later in this report. Throughout this report, we will touch on various issues that have come to our attention, including questions about whether the same level of quality control is present in the prison-based programs.

Prison-based college programs have a tremendous role to play in reentry. This goes beyond how participation in such programs are counted in the awarding LCTA (Limited Credit Time Allowance), to the way that college better prepares incarcerated people for community life. Reentry is a relatively recent concept, dating back only to 1999, when then-Attorney General Jane Reno and Jeremy Travis (the director of the National Institute of Justice at the time) recognized that mass incarceration also meant that hundreds of thousands of people were released from prison each year. Unlike parole, which is a time-limited, supervision-focused, and formal status, reentry is a process of reestablishing a meaningful life in the community. Travis (2007) defined it as follows:

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<sup>32</sup> An MDRC study found that 80% of CUNY community college students and 50% of SUNY students require some level of remedial courses.

<sup>33</sup> Rising Hope (<http://www.risinghopeinc.org/>) is the only non-profit organization providing non-credited post-secondary courses in prisons. Although most of their work is focused on pre-college (developmental courses), several of their courses have been reviewed and recommended for credit by the National College Credit Recommendation Service. At least two of the college-in-prison programs in New York accept these reviewed courses for credit.

*[Prisoner reentry is] community-based, involves new entities such as intermediaries or courts in reentry management, and explicitly uses social service agencies as boundary-spanning institutions that reach behind the prison walls and work together to ease the difficulties of the transition to community (p. 85).*

This framing of reentry opens the doors to considering the role that colleges and universities have, not only in partnering with DOCCS to create higher education inside prison walls, but also how to build on and sustain student commitment to college once they are released. It also directs attention to the benefits of leveraging community-based reentry programs, particularly those programs that are dedicated to helping formerly incarcerated people matriculate and succeed in college in the community.

Although there are some important differences in the mission and purpose of higher education and corrections systems, both share an interest in ensuring that people leaving their institutions are successful in the world. Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people offer assets to college institutions, bringing a diversity of intellect, culture, race, ethnicity, and life experience. As citizens of New York, we all share an understanding that success means the ability to be self-supporting, productive, and engage in healthy personal relationships. Moreover, whether in the community or behind prison walls, the decision to enroll in college is a personal choice motivated by a desire to better oneself intellectually and economically. Both the differences and commonalities between higher education and corrections will be further examined in Chapter III to consider opportunities for expanding higher education in New York State correctional institutions.

### III. Making the Improbable Possible: Partnerships between Higher Education & Corrections

Higher education in New York State prisons is a product of shifting public policies, the work of criminal justice reformers, and the yearning for education that persists even among people confined behind prison walls. To get the most thorough accounting of how college programs operate inside DOCCS facilities, we examined documents and data from college programs and DOCCS, and interviewed key stakeholders, notably corrections staff, representatives from the college programs who work inside prisons, and incarcerated students.

#### College-in-Prison Programs in New York: Historical Context

The education of people incarcerated in prisons has been a topic of interest and debate dating back to colonial times. From the founding of the United States through the mid-19th century, attention was largely focused on the teaching of basic literacy to enable incarcerated people to read the Bible, as religion was thought to be key to rehabilitation. Higher education was of little relevance given that many people within the general population lacked basic literacy skills: a high school education was a rarity. Nonetheless, this “Sabbath School Period” was thought to have some of the same transformative elements that is now attributed to higher education and enabled many illiterate incarcerated people to learn to read (Gehring 1997).

College-level instruction was available in prisons as early as 1876, with Elmira, led by prison reformer Zebulon Brockway, being one of the first facilities to offer classes ranging from geography, economics, and ethics, to industrial arts taught by professors from Elmira College, Syracuse University, and Cornell University (Brockway 1912). University of California professors created a college program for people incarcerated in San Quentin in 1914. By the 1920s, college credit courses were offered to incarcerated people through correspondence programs. Correctional education of all types expanded in the years immediately following World War II, and by the 1960s, there were many face-to-face college courses offered to incarcerated individuals throughout the country. In 1964, Maine introduced the first educational furlough; by 1970, eleven states allowed for educational furloughs, including New York State (Gehring 1997).

Funding for these college programs in prison varied – charitable contributions, federal funding sources for job training, vocational rehabilitation funds, and even the GI Bill. However, the introduction of Pell grants, in 1972, provided the major impetus for the expansion of higher education in prison. In the words of correctional education historian Thomas Gehring (1997), “When the first Pell grant funded post-secondary programs, [staff] probably felt as though Santa Claus had finally arrived” (p.48). Moreover, the New York State legislature created the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) in 1974 to supplement the federal Pell support. Both Pell and TAP were available to all low income students; incarcerated students were not excluded from eligibility and thus were able to access college. With these funding sources, the number of college programs in prison in the United States grew from 12 in 1965, to more than 350 in 1994 (McCarty 2006). The ability of incarcerated people to access to Pell and TAP grants made it possible for almost every prison in New York State to have a college program.

Most college programs in the state and nation came to an abrupt end when Congress, through the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, barred access to Pell grants by incarcerated people. The following year, New York State ended incarcerated students’ access to TAP grants. According to DOCCS records, 3,445 students were enrolled in 25 prison-based college programs the spring of 1995. The next year, only 256 students remained in four college programs. One DOCCS official we interviewed described the ending of incarcerated students’ eligibility for Pell grants as shocking: “One day the programs were there and the next day they came and packed up and were gone.”

Efforts to restore Pell and TAP grant eligibility for incarcerated people were underway almost as soon as access to these funds was stripped. These efforts were often led by incarcerated people themselves: in New York State,

women incarcerated in Bedford Hills organized to bring higher education back to their facility, leveraging their strong relationships with residents in the Westchester County community that is home to the prison. The Bedford Hills Inmate Committee worked with community members and the Superintendent to identify how higher education could be restored to the women incarcerated in the facility. This broad-based support resulted in the reintroduction of college programs at Bedford in 1997, with Marymount Manhattan College serving as the degree-granting institution (Fine et al. 2001) and courses provided by many other colleges working in collaboration. The success by the women incarcerated in Bedford provided a valuable lesson for men imprisoned in Sing Sing and spurred the development of the Hudson Link program. A few other programs, like the Consortium of the Niagara Frontier<sup>34</sup> made up of Niagara University, Canisius College, and Daemen College, managed to continue, albeit at diminished capacity, through private donations and a small state grant secured by their state representatives.

The pioneering efforts were led by dedicated, committed individuals, inside and out of prison walls. Private philanthropies such as the Sunshine Lady Foundation, the Open Society Foundation and the Ford Foundation supported private colleges – like Bard, Marymount Manhattan, and Hudson Link, a not-for-profit organization coordinating a number of college-in-prison programs. They were key in reestablishing higher education programs in prison. These endeavors were buttressed by research that emerged as early as 1996 that showed the efficacy of higher education, particularly its impact on recidivism rates.

This commitment to restore higher education in prison from people inside and out has gradually built back programs in 25 New York State prisons today, with two more slated to open in the 2018-2019 academic year. The 2007 appointment of Brian Fischer as DOCCS Commissioner by then-Governor Eliot Spitzer further advanced interest in expanding higher education in prisons. Fischer came to the position after serving as the Superintendent of Sing Sing Correctional Facility from 2000 to 2007. Sing Sing was known for its long support of college in prison: the New York Theological Seminary at Sing Sing was one of the oldest programs in the state, and Hudson Link at Sing Sing was established in 1998.

As Commissioner, Fischer proved to be an advocate for college-in-prison programs. He brought together key stakeholders from the Department of Education, Department of Labor, community-based organizations, higher education institutions, and all correctional facility superintendents. Facility superintendents and local colleges were encouraged to develop partnerships to expand college programming with private funding. He also required that the college-in-prison programs be credit-bearing courses. Until the advent of the District Attorney of New York's Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (DANY CJII) in 2017, this was the framework of college programs operating in prisons in New York State.

At this writing, there is both federal and New York State momentum to extend higher education in prisons. The building blocks for expansion include the federal Second Chance Pell Pilot program that is allowing 69 colleges and universities in partnership with correctional departments across the United States to access Pell grants that will allow an estimated 12,000 incarcerated people to enroll in college. Eight colleges in New York State received these awards.<sup>35</sup> Governor Cuomo began the state-led efforts to grow college-in-prison programs in 2014, and in July of 2017, the Governor announced plans to support new and existing programs in 17 prisons through asset forfeiture funds provided by the Office of the District Attorney of New York County. There is broad consensus on the efficacy of making higher education more widely available to incarcerated people.

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<sup>34</sup>This program no longer operates.

<sup>35</sup>The New York State colleges selected for these grants are Bard College, Marymount Manhattan College, Nyack College, CUNY Hostos Community College, CUNY LaGuardia Community College, CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Mercy College, and SUNY North Country Community College. The DOCCS partners include Coxsackie, Eastern, Fishkill, Green Haven, Taconic, Woodbourne, Otisville, Queensboro, Bedford Hills, Sing Sing, Taconic, Adirondack, Bare Hill, and Franklin.

## The Current Landscape of Higher Education in New York Prisons

During fall 2017, there were 1,317 students enrolled in accredited college courses in New York prisons. This represents approximately 2.5% of the roughly 52,000 people under DOCCS custody at the time and about 2.8% of the population incarcerated in facilities in the maximum and medium security prisons where college programs operate.<sup>36</sup> Because there are college programs in all three of the women's facilities, a higher percentage of incarcerated women are enrolled in college courses. In 2014, women made up just 4.5 percent of the total population under DOCCS custody, but 22 percent of incarcerated people enrolled in college courses in state prisons (NYS DOCCS 2015). Moreover, looking at the data from the perspective of opportunity and need to expand college education in prison, only about 4 percent of the roughly 31,000 people under DOCCS custody with a high school diploma or GED are currently enrolled in a college program.<sup>37</sup>

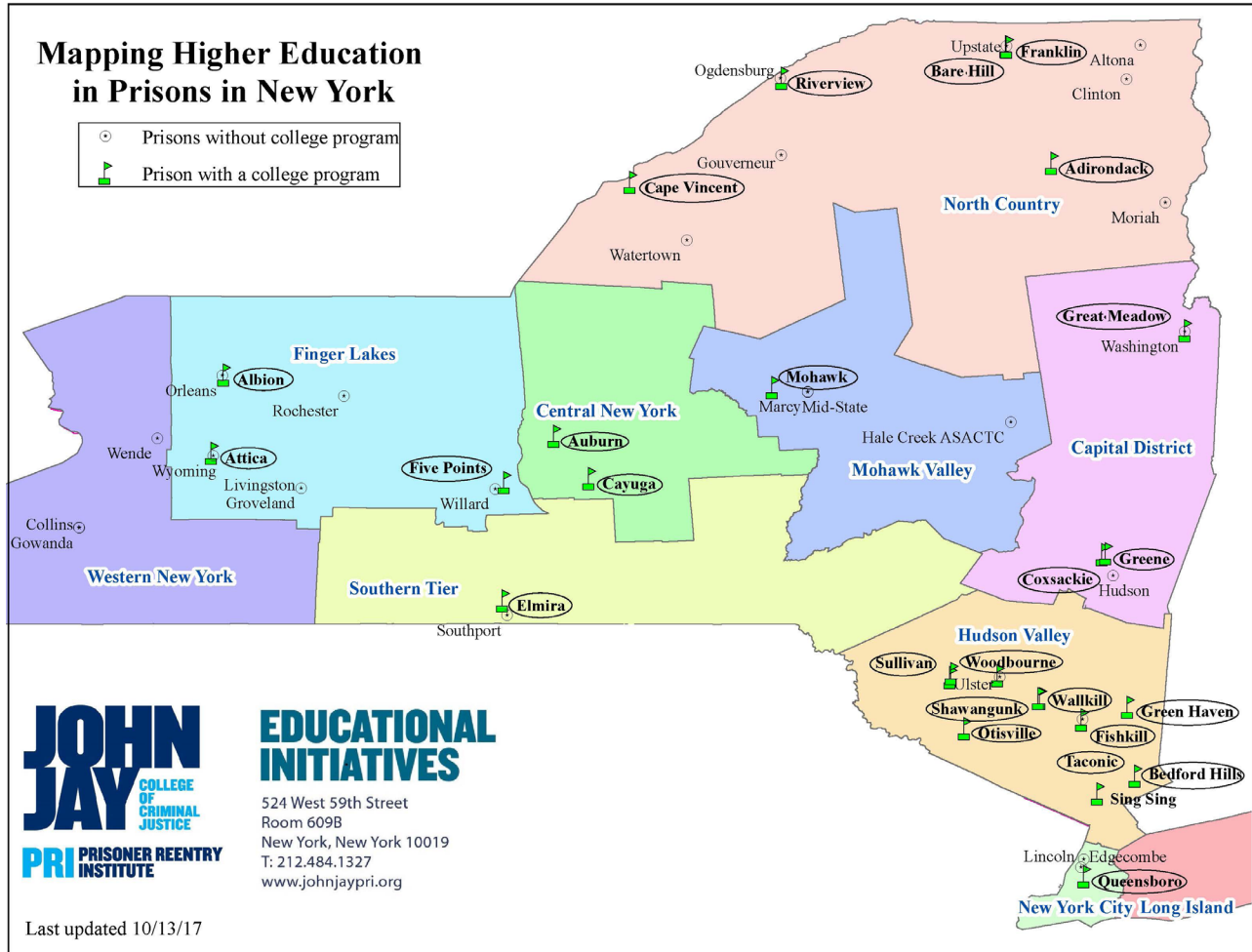
Just over half of the maximum and medium security prisons in New York – 25 facilities – host some form of face-to-face college programming. Of the 54 DOCCS facilities, 10 out of 16 male maximum security facilities and 12 out of 27 male medium security prisons house college programs. All three of the female prisons – two medium and one maximum – house college programs. The prisons with college education programs are shown in Figure 6 and listed in Table 1. Most prisons with college programs are clustered in the Hudson Valley – near the New York metropolitan area. The prisons without college programs tend to be further from New York City, likely a function of the fact that incarcerated people in downstate prisons (Bedford Hills and Sing Sing) were leaders in working with community groups and colleges from New York City and its immediate environment, as well as the ability of the colleges and non-profit organizations to generate funding and support for such programs. Moreover, the political environment of these communities was and remains more supportive of college-in-prison programs. However, with the burgeoning interest in higher education in prison, there is an opportunity to ensure that college programs are available to incarcerated people throughout the state.

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<sup>36</sup> At the time that the research for this project was conducted, college programs operated in medium and maximum security-level facilities based on the expectation that students will be able to stay long enough to complete coursework.

<sup>37</sup> DOCCS also provided data that separated out incarcerated people who were defined “college eligible” based on time to release as well as high school diploma or high school equivalence diploma. Based on this DOCCS definition, there were 13,575 incarcerated people who fell into this category. However, not all college programs operating in DOCCS consider time to release as criteria for entrance. We would note that not all incarcerated people with a high school diploma would be college-ready.

**FIGURE 6: Map of Prisons with and without a College Program**



**TABLE 1: New York State Prisons with a College Program**

NYS DOCCS Facilities	Higher Education Institution or Program Operating in Prisons
Adirondack	SUNY North County Community College
Albion	Medaille College
Attica	SUNY Genesee Community College
Auburn	Cornell Prison Education Program (degree granted through SUNY Cayuga Community College)
Bare Hill	SUNY North County Community College
Bedford Hills	Bedford Hills College Program (Consortium run by and granting AA degree from Marymount and includes courses delivered by Barnard College, Pace University, Manhattan College, Manhattanville College, Marymount, Sarah Lawrence College, Bank Street College, and SUNY Purchase)
Cape Vincent	SUNY Jefferson Community College
Cayuga	Cornell Prison Education Program (AA degree granted through SUNY Cayuga Community College)
Coxsackie	Bard Prison Initiative

continued

TABLE 1: *continued*

Eastern	Bard Prison Initiative
Fishkill	Bard Prison Initiative, Hudson Link (Nyack College) and Rising Hope
Five Points	Cornell Prison Education Program (AA degree granted through SUNY Cayuga Community College) & Hobart & William Smith College
Franklin	SUNY North County Community College
Great Meadow	Bennington College
Green Haven	Bard Prison Initiative
Greene	Hudson Link (AA conferred by SUNY Columbia-Greene Community College and includes courses delivered by Siena College)
Marcy	SUNY Mohawk Valley Community College
Mohawk	Mohawk Consortium (SUNY Herkimer County Community College, Hamilton College, and Colgate University)
Otisville	CUNY John Jay College, Prisoner Reentry Institute
Riverview	St. Lawrence University
Shawangunk	Hudson Link (AA through SUNY Ulster Community College)
Sing Sing	Hudson Link (Mercy College) and Pre-college programs through NY Theological Seminary and Rising Hope
Sullivan	Hudson Link (AA with SUNY Sullivan Community College & BA with St. Thomas Aquinas College)
Taconic	Bard Prison Initiative & Hudson Link (including Columbia University, Nyack College & Vassar College)
Wallkill	New York University
Woodbourne	Bard Prison Initiative and Rising Hope

### Structure of college-in-prison programs: Diversity of models

The structure of college programs in New York State prisons is challenging to succinctly summarize. The programs are a reflection of the enterprising, eclectic, and dedicated institutions – both corrections and higher education – and people that recognized that all individuals, including those incarcerated, benefit from higher education. The programs vary by type of program (two- or four-year) and type of college (public or private), as well as whether there is a collaboration among two or more institutions, whether college credits are granted, whether degrees are granted, and whether reentry supports are provided.



**TABLE 2: Higher Education in Prison in New York: List by College Provider, 2017**

<b>College-in-Prison Program</b>	<b>Participating Higher Education Institutions</b>	<b>Degrees Granted</b>	<b>Number of Students Enrolled by Program**</b>
Bard Prison Initiative	Bard College	AA, BA	300
Bedford Hills College Program	Marymount Manhattan College (consortium leader)	AA, BA	170
	Bank Street College		
	Barnard College		
	Columbia University*		
	Manhattan College		
	Manhattanville College		
	Pace University		
	Sarah Lawrence College		
	SUNY Purchase		
	Union Theological Seminary		
Bennington College Prison Education Initiative	Bennington College		42
Cornell Prison Education Program (CPEP)	Cornell University (program leader)	AA	154
	Hobart & William Smith College		
	SUNY Cayuga Community College (degree-granting school for CPEP)		
Hudson Link	Columbia University*		461
	Mercy College	AS, BS	
	Nyack College	AA, BS	
	St. Thomas Aquinas College	BA	
	Siena College		
	SUNY Columbia-Greene Community College	AA	
	SUNY Sullivan Community College	AA	
	SUNY Ulster County Community College	AA	
	Vassar College		
Medaille College	Medaille College	AS	32
Mohawk Consortium	SUNY Herkimer County Community College, Hamilton College, and Colgate University	AA	33
New York Theological Seminary Prison Program	New York Theological Seminary	MPS	20
New York University Prison Education Program	New York University	AA	82
Prison-to-College Pipeline, Prisoner Reentry Institute	CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice		52
St. Lawrence University Inside-Out Exchange Program	St. Lawrence University		10

*continued*

TABLE 2: *continued*

SUNY Genesee Community College	SUNY Genesee Community College	AAS	26
SUNY Jefferson Community College	SUNY Jefferson Community College	AA	20
SUNY Mohawk Valley Community College	SUNY Mohawk Valley Community College	AS	23
SUNY North Country Community College	SUNY North Country Community College	AA + AAS	145
<i>* Columbia University participates in two separate programs</i>			
<i>** Enrollment Numbers Fall 2016-Spring 2017</i>			

Higher education in prison in New York is carried out through a total of 15 programs involving over 30 different colleges and institutions, plus one not-for-profit organization that is not an accredited higher education institution but does offer accredited courses. Roughly one-third of these colleges are public institutions of higher education (SUNY or CUNY schools), and roughly two-thirds are private, not-for-profit colleges.

There is considerable variation in the operation of college-in-prison programs in New York State, including different types of administrative and financial structures, faculty, and pathways to higher education post-incarceration. College-in-prison programs can be classified into three models: stand-alone programs, wherein the college courses are delivered by a single institution; consortia, where a number of colleges collaborate under the leadership of one of the institutional partners; and a non-academic, not-for-profit organization that manages college courses delivered by several institutions.

Table 3 summarizes these models. In brief, there are 11 stand-alone colleges, three consortia models, and one not-for-profit coordinating organization. The programs operate independently from one another and differ based on the individual policies, practices, and needs of the specific prisons and the individual policies, practices, and capacity of the educational institutions. There are different constraints that flow from whether the correctional facility is a medium or maximum security facility, how much space is available, and the culture and leadership of the facility, i.e., specifically the extent to which the prison leadership is supportive of higher education.

**TABLE 3: College-in-Prison Program Organizational Structures**

Type/Structure	Key Features	Programs	Total Number of Programs
Stand-alone programs	Individual college provides the academic and administrative operations of the program. The credits or degrees are also conferred by the college. The college works with DOCCS to coordinate clearances, provides faculty, coordinates textbooks, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bard Prison Initiative</li> <li>• Bennington College</li> <li>• John Jay College Prison-to-College Pipeline (Prisoner Reentry Institute)</li> <li>• Medaille College</li> <li>• New York Theological Seminary</li> <li>• NYU Prison Education Project</li> <li>• St. Lawrence</li> <li>• SUNY Genesee</li> <li>• SUNY Jefferson</li> <li>• SUNY Mohawk Valley Community College</li> <li>• SUNY North Country</li> </ul>	11
Consortium	Several colleges working together to provide higher education in prison. Typically, there is a central college that is responsible for coordinating the administrative function for the other colleges (coordinating with DOCCS, ensuring that curriculum aligns with student needs, etc.). Faculty from several colleges. For degree-granting program models, one college is responsible for conferring the degree.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cornell Prison Education Program (CPEP)</b> – Cornell is the coordinating institution, and SUNY Cayuga Community College is the degree-granting institution</li> <li>• <b>Bedford Hills College Program</b> – Marymount Manhattan is the degree-granting institution and project coordinator. The participating colleges are Bank Street College, Barnard College, Columbia University, Manhattan College, Manhattanville College, Pace University, Sarah Lawrence College, SUNY Purchase, and Union Theological Seminary</li> <li>• <b>Mohawk Consortium College-in-Prison Program</b> – SUNY Herkimer County Community College is the degree-granting institution. The participating colleges are Hamilton College and Colgate University</li> </ul>	3

*continued*

TABLE 3: continued

<p>Not-for-profit coordinating organization</p>	<p>Non-profit organization provides the administrative operations on behalf of the colleges. The college/university is responsible for the academic offerings, coordinating curriculum, providing faculty, etc. This organizational structure can involve several colleges working at one facility or one college operating at a single facility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison</b> – The participating colleges are Columbia University, Mercy College, Nyack College, St. Thomas Aquinas College, Siena College, SUNY Columbia-Greene, SUNY Sullivan, SUNY Ulster County, and Vassar College</li> </ul>	<p>1</p>
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The development of college-in-prison programs has been very individualized, often the creation of a single faculty member with an interest in this type of initiative. The college presents a program proposal to the superintendent of the particular prison; if approved by the superintendent, it then is reviewed by DOCCS Central Office for final approval. The individual program agreement between the college and prison specifies such matters as eligibility, type of course or courses offered, number of credits offered per semester, any degrees granted, the material review process, and the faculty vetting process.

College programs have their own parameters and constraints that determine how and what they offer to incarcerated students. A multitude of factors contribute to the differences in college programs, with funding/capacity being the most significant. The extent to which a college can offer courses and degrees is also influenced by the “buy in” from the college administrators, including the Board of Directors, and the local political climate. Some colleges are four-year/graduate institutions and do not offer associate degrees to any students either on campus or in college-in-prison programs. In these cases, the colleges may partner with another higher educational institution that can offer the degree. This is a particularly common arrangement for colleges that are part of a multi-facility, multi-university consortium.

The interconnection among colleges is a distinguishing factor across many of the college programs operating in New York State prisons. As noted, there are 15 programs comprised of over 30 higher education institutions offering classes in 25 prisons. The largest programs are those that are operated by one lead college or organization but are made up of multiple colleges. Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison, the Bedford Hills College Program, the Cornell Prison Education Program, and the Mohawk Consortium are the consortia-model programs. The consortia programs together are reaching 66 percent of all incarcerated college students. Under this model, instructors from several institutions deliver courses, and students accumulate credits for a degree granted by one of the participating institutions. Hudson Link is not a college in itself, but rather a not-for-profit organization that coordinates its nine college partners that operate in six facilities. Hudson Link is the largest program and serves 23 percent of all incarcerated students enrolled in college in New York State prisons. The Bedford Hills College Program operates only in the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (a women’s maximum prison) and is led by Marymount Manhattan College in collaboration with eight other colleges. Marymount Manhattan is the degree-granting college. The partnering colleges provide instructors for courses that can lead to an associate or bachelor’s degree uniquely designed for the program.

The day-to-day operations of each consortium program differ as well, again determined largely by the resources available to the program. The Bedford Hills College Program noted above has operated for 20 years; it is staffed by its Director and Assistant Director and maintains significant volunteer support. The program also has an advisory board with strong affiliation to Marymount Manhattan faculty and administration. Another consortium, the Cornell Prison Education Program (CPEP) has operated for 18 years and is now at four different prisons for men. CPEP provides the administrative structure and hires the instructors for the program from several institutions; the degree-granting institution is Cayuga Community College, although none of its community college faculty teaches in the program. The Mohawk Consortium, a relatively new program operating in Mohawk Correctional Facility, a medium security prison for men, draws on instructional resources from private institutions – Hamilton College, Colgate University, and Herkimer County Community College (HCCC). HCCC is the degree-conferring institution. Finally, as noted, Hudson Link is a 19-year old independent, private, non-profit organization overseen by a board of directors. It contracts with multiple higher education institutions (private and public) and raises private funds to cover tuition and fees. The staff members of Hudson Link provide administrative and support services to their college partners and students, and they serve as the liaison to DOCCS. The amount of administrative support provided by the college influences how the college program is able to recruit and enroll students, order supplies, and communicate with DOCCS.<sup>38</sup> For example, in one college program, the instructor is responsible for all administrative tasks as well as preparing and delivering the course curriculum and interacting with students. The larger/better-resourced programs have specific staff assigned to these administrative tasks, freeing up their instructors to concentrate on the academic substance of the program.

Unlike multi-college collaborations, 11 out of 15 of college-in-prison programs that operate inside state prisons are administered by a single higher education institution (referred to in this document as “stand-alone college-in-prison program”). The largest of these stand-alone programs is the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI). BPI operates in six facilities and serves 23 percent of all enrolled students in New York. The operation of the stand-alone programs also varies by the resources available to them, the environment of the prison where they are located, and the philosophies of the home institutions.

A final variation in the structure of college-in-prison programs is the extent to which they involve students from the home campus. There are three programs that bring in students from their home campus who study side-by-side with incarcerated students. Vassar and St. Lawrence College have been formally trained by Temple University’s Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, a model that brings campus-based college students to incarcerated students for semester-long courses held in a prison or other correctional setting. John Jay College’s Prison-to-College Pipeline also brings students from its campus into a state prison in what is called a Learning Exchange. The correctional facilities with programs that involve campus students are Otisville (John Jay), Taconic (Vassar), and Riverview (St. Lawrence).

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<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that in campus settings, many of these tasks are done online rather than manually as is the case in correctional facilities that are not linked electronically to the college systems.

## Policies on the Granting of Degrees and Credit

In all, 11 of the higher education programs that operate in New York State prisons grant degrees to incarcerated students who earn the required credits. Seven offer an associate degree only, three offer both an associate degree and a bachelor's degree, and one offers a master's degree. Two programs are not degree granting, but do offer credits that can be transferred to college in the community. Moreover, one of these institutions is considered a reentry model that focuses on transitioning their in-prison students to CUNY institutions after release. In some instances, institutions that do not offer an associate degree through their campus-based programs have either developed special two-year degree programs for their incarcerated students or have partnered with community colleges that grant such degrees.

## Funding

With the ending of Pell and TAP eligibility for incarcerated people, college-in-prison programs relied heavily on private grants, and more recently, on public funds provided through the federal Pell grant demonstration program and DANY CJII. Private institutions have been the primary recipients of the Pell demonstration and DANY grants. Two public colleges also receive this funding.

## College-in-Prison Program Staffing

The largest single expense for most programs is the teaching faculty.<sup>39</sup> Adjunct instructors are the most common faculty teaching prison-based college classes. However, some of the programs affiliated with more well-endowed colleges are able to make arrangements with academic departments to provide faculty, some of whom volunteer their time.

All instructors teaching prison college courses are required to have the same qualifications as any instructor teaching the same course on campus and go through the same approval process used for teaching on their home campus. The remuneration for adjuncts ranges from less than \$2,000 for a 3-credit course at the more open-access, typically community college programs, to over \$7,000 for 3-credit course at other schools. Their experience and pedagogical skills vary.

## Administrative Resources

There are a range of administrative functions required by a college-in-prison program: help with recruitment, registration including obtaining transcripts, completion of FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), hiring and getting security clearances for instructors, preparing/reviewing course curricula, advising students, organizing graduations, and submitting course materials for review by DOCCS. Based on our review, programs that are administered by a single college appear to have fewer resources than programs operated through a consortium structure. The exceptions to this are the Bard Prison Initiative which has a substantial staff and volunteer base and the John Jay Prison-to-College-Pipeline Program. Most other stand-alone programs have only one administrator serving all of the above-noted functions. Course instructors and program administrators face real challenges to maintaining regular communication, including varying work schedules and the physical distance between the campus and prison where the program operates.

Consortium programs have a broader division of labor and peer support. Instructors focus on teaching, and other staff members affiliated with the larger consortium run the administrative and student service aspects of the program. Consortia programs that operate in multiple facilities have an on-site Academic Coordinator in each prison who oversees program operations in the facility. These coordinators are readily available to troubleshoot, work with

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<sup>39</sup> A few programs rely on professors who volunteer their time.

instructors around curriculum issues, address student needs, and provide consistent program support. However, the consortium model has some unique challenges in managing communication among the partnering colleges, such as how students fare if and when they move from one partnering college to another. Additionally, staff of the individual colleges participating in the consortium expressed frustration about having limited contact with DOCCS staff in the prisons in which they operate as the lead college is largely responsible for those relations.

## Reentry Resources

As discussed in Chapter II, most incarcerated people are released back into the community. The official mechanisms for release, such as parole, primarily address the requirements of community supervision. The broader concept of reentry is concerned with the resources, supports, opportunities, and barriers that impact how formerly incarcerated people reintegrate into community life.

People who have attended college while incarcerated are better positioned than their non-college peers to successfully reenter. They have an important asset to place on their resume (college credits or a degree) that enhances employment prospects, have gained qualities such as intellectual rigor and perseverance through college study, and have developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills that help people overcome problems in productive ways. They also may have a clearer view of what they want to pursue when they are released, i.e., continuing their college education.

There is limited data on how many formerly incarcerated college students enroll in college upon release. One of the few studies that exists was commissioned by the Virginia Department of Correctional Education. It found that between 11 and 15 percent of people enrolled in post-secondary education programs while in prison enrolled in Virginia colleges upon release (U.S. Department of Education 2009). Proof of students' commitment to continue their education post-release comes from interviews with formerly incarcerated students. In *Higher Education and Reentry: The Gifts They Bring*, a 2013 report by the Prisoner Reentry Institute, Henry, a formerly incarcerated student who enrolled in a master's in social work program upon release, recalled:

*When I was on the inside, I prepared myself to, hopefully, one day come home. I knew that school was something I wanted to do to improve myself. I also knew that school would be a place for me to adjust back to society in a healthy environment. I utilized school in so many different ways. It gave me a chance ... to unwind, to decompress ... so that I can figure out all these other steps that are in front of me. I knew if I was sitting at a desk with a book, I would not only figure out my lesson plan, but other things in life as well (Prisoner Reentry Institute 2013).*

Program administrators in six of the New York State college-in-prison programs described reentry services that are part of their programs.<sup>40</sup> Services include assistance with continuing college education, but they go beyond that. The programs offer assistance with other basic reentry needs such as employment and housing: the New York University program defines its post-release services as attending to the general well-being of the formerly incarcerated student. Programs that explicitly focus on reentry target incarcerated people who are within five years of release. John Jay College's Prison-to-College Pipeline is specifically designated as a reentry model offering courses to incarcerated students and assisting in their transfer to a CUNY school upon their release. John Jay's Prisoner Reentry Institute (PRI) also houses College Initiative (CI), one of the pioneering programs that helps formerly incarcerated individuals enroll in higher education post-release.

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<sup>40</sup> We did not explore any relationship with DOCCS Temporary Release/Education Release programming, as such has been virtually defunct for decades. However, this may be an area for future exploration.

## Operations: Eligibility, Recruitment, and Participation

**Recruitment & Eligibility:** Recruitment into prison-based college programs happens through a variety of mechanisms. Information about college programs is posted in the prisons. The DOCCS Education Supervisors play an integral role in the recruitment process for most programs. They can offer input critical to the selection process because they have access to the incarcerated person's disciplinary record, which affects eligibility. In addition, some of the programs have agreements with DOCCS that allow them to recruit at several facilities and, with DOCCS approval, the accepted applicants are permitted to move to the facility where the college program operates.

Finally, based on information gathered through surveys of incarcerated students, word of mouth and observing other incarcerated students are perhaps the most important factors in generating interest in college among incarcerated people. People enrolled in prison-based college programs are recognized as the best ambassadors for the program by college and DOCCS staff as well. Incarcerated college students are regarded as role models to others and their descriptions of the value of the college programs motivates other incarcerated people to consider higher education:

*I was watching men around me, who I respect and admire, begin to grow emotionally, socially and intellectually. And the only thing they had in common was the college program. – Student*

I heard about the college program from other inmates. I was inspired by the analytical skills of the guys enrolled in the college program. I too wanted to have conversations as sound, educated, and analytical as them. I saw how they changed their lives and became a better group of people who wanted to help others. – Student

There are several standard eligibility requirements that must be met to enroll in any prison-based college program in New York State. The prospective student must possess a high school diploma or GED. DOCCS also has rules regarding a prospective student's disciplinary record, although the specifics of length of time without any "tickets" and the type of infraction, varies by prison.

Beyond these basics, admission standards vary by program and prison. Some programs may require a written essay and personal interview, others, a questionnaire and assessment test, and still others, an academic evaluation and entrance exam. An analysis undertaken by Human Impact Partners (2015) in its review of the benefits of New York State college-in-prison programs estimated that the average acceptance rate was 30 percent. The acceptance rate ranged from a high of 100 percent to a low of 9 percent.

Eligibility for some of the college-in-prison programs is restricted by an incarcerated person's time to release, e.g., programs that limit enrollment to people who are within five years of release. In some cases, eligibility, particularly around time to release, is driven by the preferences of the funding source. The target population for programs funded by DANY is incarcerated people who are within two to five years of release; the Pell demonstration grant funding prioritizes enrolling people who are within five years of release. Several programs focus on degree completion during incarceration. One program excludes people with specific conviction histories. Programs may also have requirements related to educational holds, meaning that a student must agree to be housed at the facility for a designated period of time in order to participate in the college program.

**College Preparation Programs:** College preparation programs help equip students with no prior experience in a college environment and/or long gaps in their educational experience. Our interviews indicate that the need for college preparation is relatively common. One college administrator reported that, "We have a hard time attracting a cohort of applicants that already has high quality college prep in hand." As noted in Chapter II, it is also common for many aspiring college students in the community to need college prep work.

The identification of college prep needs occurs during the enrollment process. However, not all college-in-prison programs are able to offer preparatory courses. Some programs – Bedford Hills College Program, Cornell



Prison Education Program, Bennington Prison Initiative, Hudson Link, Ulster Community College, and John Jay College's Prison-to-College Pipeline Program – offer remediation courses to prospective students who did not pass their entrance exam. These students can reapply for admission once the remediation courses are successfully completed. Another program (Medaille College) requires all applicants to take three workshops to prepare for college-level courses before they are permitted to take credit-bearing classes. The St. Lawrence Inside-Out program incorporates a “First-Year Program,” which is also required for new on-campus students, and which helps students improve and develop research and other skills needed to succeed in higher education.

**Role of DOCCS:** As noted earlier in this report, DOCCS has an admirable history of welcoming college programs in facilities. During the heyday of access, i.e., when Pell and TAP grants were available, almost every prison in the state had a college education program. According to DOCCS officials, in the earlier era of college-in-prison operations (1970-1995) DOCCS policies pertaining to college-in-prison programs were codified in a manual referred to as the Unified College Guidelines with standard operating procedures for each college program. Accountability strategies, including use of standard forms for reporting and a system for auditing college programs were built into these guidelines. Moreover, DOCCS had high expectations for college programs, including matriculating agreements that guaranteed that qualified, incarcerated students would be eligible to matriculate in the campus college upon their release. The State University of New York Memorandum to Presidents on “The Admissions of Ex-Offenders to SUNY” (1981) included the DOCCS agreement with colleges regarding the provision of college courses in correctional facilities. College responsibilities continued post-release as follows:

*Upon release, the student who has taken courses while incarcerated and has maintained a 2.0 quality point average should be accepted on the campus of the college that offered those courses. Parolees may not be denied acceptance to the campus solely because of their status as ex-offenders (Attachment B p.4).*

Even during the time that college-in-prison programs were more widely available, arrangements between the college programs and the prison were largely the purview of the individual facility. Oversight for college-in-prison programs is primarily the responsibility of the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and the Education Supervisor in each facility. The Unified Program Guidelines were replaced by program proposals written in partnership between each college program and the superintendent of the facility where they operate. As a result, agreements about specific functioning of programs vary based on these individualized program proposals and vary among prisons and each college program.

One feature common to each prison is a Media Review Committee comprised of Program Services and Security staff. The Media Review Committee reviews a variety of written material intended for incarcerated people to determine whether the material appears to violate standards set forth in DOCCS Directive 4572 (NYS DOCCS 2013). According to college-in-prison program staff, this Committee examines course syllabi, reading material, and media; materials can be restricted if they are thought to diverge from directive standards.<sup>41</sup> Library materials are also subject to a similar review. All college-affiliated staff and volunteers who come into the prison must be approved by DOCCS; the screening process includes a background check. Corrections officers are assigned to monitor all classes and control entrance to classes. In most cases, the officer remains outside the classroom and, as needed, can observe through a window. However, per DOCCS rules, officers must be stationed inside the classroom if there are any volunteers under the age of 21.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> There are a variety of reasons why a publication can be excluded, including such as materials thought to incite “violence” or “disobedience toward law enforcement officers or prison personnel,” or material thought to contain information that might aid in escape. There are other categories of topics that are also excludable. See NYS DOCCS Directive #4572, <http://www.doccs.ny.gov/Directives/4572.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> NYS DOCCS Directive #4750, <http://www.doccs.ny.gov/Directives/4750.pdf> for a complete list.

College-in-prison programs have a close affiliation with the DOCCS Education Supervisor and the Deputy Superintendent for Programs in each facility who are the liaisons between DOCCS and the colleges. They play an important role as supporters and gatekeepers. As noted, DOCCS staff members also facilitate student recruitment and processes related to transferring students.

Participation in college programs is considered a valuable activity, and in some prisons/programs, is a program assignment that is eligible for monetary remuneration to the incarcerated student.<sup>43</sup> Such participation and attainment of a degree can result in a reduction of time through various mechanisms, including the calculation of Limited Credit Time Allowance (LCTA) discussed earlier.<sup>44</sup> The DOCCS Offender Rehabilitation Counselor (ORC) is responsible for compiling this information based on assessment provided by the DOCCS Education Supervisor.

**Transferring College Credits: DOCCS and College Programs:** One college program that recruits from multiple facilities depends on DOCCS personnel to be able to transfer students once they have been accepted to the program. Many programs depend on DOCCS to be able to hold students in a facility until they can complete their college courses. The unique agreement between each program and the DOCCS administration at each facility has an impact on the chances in enrollment that occur when students need to move between facilities. DOCCS will only transfer a student once they have determined that the student meets the classification and security criteria to be housed in the prison where the college program is located. In addition, the individual must have previously completed, or be able to complete, mandatory DOCCS programming at the receiving facility.

There are also various policies and practices across prison-based college programs regarding whether students moved from one prison to another will be granted admission and be able to transfer their college credits into the program in their new facility. Although policies vary, many college programs do accept transfer credits from previous colleges, including college-in-prison programs.

## Enrollees in DOCCS College-in-Prison Programs

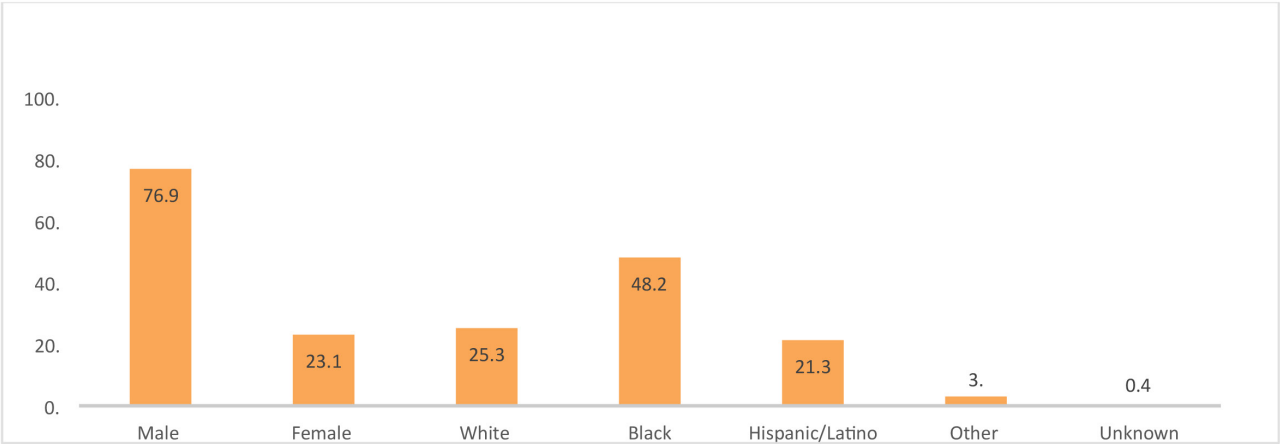
The racial and ethnic characteristics of the incarcerated student population in the fall of 2016 in New York State (Figure 7) were 25 percent white, 48 percent black/African American, and 23 percent Hispanic/Latino. The distribution of people (by race) who are participating in college programs mirrors the distribution of the general prison population in New York State. However, the racial/ethnic composition of incarcerated students contrasts with the makeup of the college student body on college campuses both at national and state level where the majority of students are white. Specifically, white students make up between 55 to 60 percent of enrollment in undergraduate education across the country. Within the SUNY system, 57.3 percent of undergraduates are white, 12.3 percent Hispanic, and 10.8 percent are black/African American.

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<sup>43</sup> Work and other designated program modules are eligible for remuneration. Incarcerated people typically used this money for commissary or to send home to families.

<sup>44</sup> The mechanisms for release vary depending on the type of sentence and length of incarceration.

**FIGURE 7: Demographic Characteristics of Incarcerated College Students in New York State, Fall 2016 (Percentage)**



Source: NYS DOCCS, Division of Program Planning, Research, and Evaluation: Snapshot of Population Characteristics by Level of Educational Attainment as of Fall 2016

The county from which an incarcerated person has been convicted and committed to DOCCS is considered to be a proxy as county of residence and in most instances, indicative of where the individual will return upon his or her release. This is an important factor for educational reentry programming for incarcerated students who wish to continue their education once released. Table 4 shows that the greatest proportion of the 1,106 people taking college courses while incarcerated come from New York City – 48.6 percent – followed by people from upstate urban areas – 21.2 percent. New York City and upstate urban communities are also the jurisdictions from which most potentially eligible students (i.e., people with high school diploma or GED) come.

**TABLE 4: “Home” Region of Incarcerated People Enrolled In or Eligible for College, October 1, 2016**

	Enrolled in College Courses		Potentially Eligible for College Courses	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total	1,106	100.0%	29,179	100.0%
New York City	537	48.6%	10,929	37.5%
Suburban New York City	155	13.9%	3,234	11.1%
Upstate Urban	235	21.2%	8,074	27.7%
Upstate Other	179	16.2%	6,942	23.8%

Source: NYS DOCCS, Division of Program Planning, Research, and Evaluation: Snapshot of Population Characteristics by Level of Educational Attainment as of Fall 2016

Additional information about the demographic characteristics of incarcerated students based on a survey conducted for this report is presented in Chapter IV.

Academic Outcomes: Data on college programs released by DOCCS in 2015 included information on academic outcomes of incarcerated students. In 2014, 1,800 incarcerated people attended one or more college programs. Academic outcomes reported for the period between September 2013 and August 2014 were as follows: a total of 93 students graduated, of whom, 59 earned an associate degree, 21 earned a bachelor's degree, and 13 earned a master's degree (NYS DOCCS 2015).

## **Conclusion**

The diverse array of college-in-prison programs in New York State is impressive and offers benefits for students, college programs, and DOCCS. In the next chapter, we look at the perspectives of these different stakeholders.

## IV. Insights from Key Stakeholders: Students, College Program Staff, and Correctional Staff

*I came to prison an unskilled high school dropout. Before becoming a college student, I was still contemplating the possibility of engaging in criminal activity – although I participated in other meaningful programs. Now, crime is no longer an option. College has helped me understand the value of posterity. I care more about others because others have demonstrated that they care for me. I understand reciprocal responsibility – the relationship between individual responsibility and collective well-being. Having had so much access to material and human resources has restored my faith in my own humanity and the humanity of others. I had never imagined myself, after becoming a street-corner gangster and petty criminal that I would end up studying congressional transcripts, the philosophical treatises of Baruch Spinoza or a Nation at Risk (a report on the state of education in the U.S. during the Ronald Regan presidency). In sum, college education has given me a set of tools that allow me to say without hesitation that I will make a difference in the world. That means at home and in the community to which I will return.*

These words were written by one of the student survey respondents attending a college program in a DOCCS facility. Many of the students commented on the ways that a college education has affected them – greater self-esteem, an appreciation of others, an ability to be self-reflective and take responsibility, and aspirations for the future. To gain a greater perspective on college-in-prison programs, we reached out to students, faculty, and DOCCS staff who are involved in the implementation of these programs. Through surveys, face-to-face interviews, and observations of classrooms and program resources and physical space, we gained valuable insight into the opportunities and challenges in prison-based higher education.

### Findings from Student Surveys

To gain insight into the lived experiences of incarcerated college students, we administered an anonymous survey to 1,274 students who were enrolled in New York State college-in-prison programs. The survey data provides both a demographic snapshot of the incarcerated student population, as well as responses to more open-ended questions about students' personal college journeys, students' perspectives about the benefits and challenges of taking college classes while incarcerated, and their recommendations for the improvement and enhancement of college-in-prison programs. Completion of the survey was voluntary: a total of 341 students completed the survey, representing a 27 percent completion rate. Results of the survey are presented below; the demographic characteristics of the respondents are described in Appendix III. In this chapter, we report on responses given by students surveyed and staff members interviewed.

Nearly one-third of the incarcerated students who responded to the survey (29.4%) are the first in their family to take college classes. With respect to educational achievements, incarcerated students are required to have at least a high school degree to enroll in college. For most students, this was the highest level of education completed: more than three-quarters of students (78.0%) had some type of high school degree. The most common degree was a high school equivalency, at almost 53 percent; only 25 percent of survey respondents had regular high school diplomas. Almost 17 percent of students enrolled in a prison-based college program already had an associate degree and 5 percent had a bachelor's degree. About four-in-ten students (39.6%) had reported that they took college classes before they were incarcerated, and approximately one-in-three (34.0%) reported having taken college courses at other correctional facilities.

**TABLE 5: Student Survey Sample: Educational Characteristics**

	<b>Number of Student Survey Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Student Survey Respondents</b>
<b>Highest Level of Education Completed</b>		
High School Equivalency	168	52.8%
High School Diploma	80	25.2%
Associate of Arts/Sciences	53	16.7%
Bachelor of Arts/Sciences	16	5.0%
Master/Professional	1	0.3%
<b>First in Family Taking College Classes</b>		
Yes	99	29.4%
No	238	70.6%
<b>Took College Classes Before Incarceration</b>		
Yes	135	39.6%
No	206	60.4%
<b>Took College Courses at Other Correctional Facilities</b>		
Yes	113	34.0%
No	219	66.0%
<b>Average Number of Courses Completed Per Student: 12 courses</b>		

Survey respondents reported that current course offerings by college-in-prison programs focus heavily on liberal arts subjects (e.g., English, History) and a handful of students reported taking business and computers classes. Most coursework is at the 100-level, i.e., introductory courses. It is more difficult to offer science or STEM courses as the space and materials for lab work is hard to accommodate or may not be allowed in prison, e.g., calculators, computers, lab equipment. In general, the course content of in-prison programs has been driven by the expertise and resources of founding faculty members, and limited by restrictions placed by security requirements. The few science courses that are available do not require laboratory work.

The majority of college-in-prison programs offer liberal arts and social sciences courses. However, the programs provided through community colleges offer the requisite math and science courses needed to fulfill the SUNY and CUNY general education requirements. Some of the more recently introduced college-in-prison (two-year) degree programs are attempting to align their curriculum with labor market opportunities. Examples of this type of course work include business entrepreneurship and human services.<sup>45</sup> One program offers a bachelor’s degree in organizational management. Also, despite the lack of internet connectivity, some programs have developed a computer science curricula.

<sup>45</sup> Human service courses are popular among the incarcerated student population reflecting a desire to “serve the community” (comment offered by an incarcerated student).

Limited course offerings restrict student choice about what type of degree to pursue. Many college program administrators and DOCCS education staff expressed concern about the real-world utility of course offerings, and the extent to which they can prepare students for the labor market. The DANY CJII initiative is bringing together programs funded through this initiative in a learning community to encourage programs to align curriculum offerings with labor market trends.<sup>46</sup>

College-in-prison programs vary depending on the institution administering the program and the facility where the program resides. Survey respondents reported having completed a total of 12 courses at the time of survey. Most students responding to the survey (76.2%) reported having access to college advisors, and 61 percent of students had access to resources such as time, space, and learning materials in the school area outside of class time. Additionally, one-third of students (32.8%) are being paid for the class module. Currently, as most required programming takes place during the day, and most college programming is voluntary, it was not surprising to find that most survey respondents (71%) reported taking classes at night. Most students also reported studying and completing coursework assignments in the evenings, especially after “lights out,” explaining that this was the optimal quiet time when they can best concentrate on their coursework.

Table 6 includes information on how students rated themselves on coursework habits, personal growth factors, and personal academic characteristics. Coursework habits included four attributes: study habits; active and positive interaction with instructors; timely completion of course assignments; and personal motivation to complete current course(s). Students rated themselves on each of these items along a range of 1 (could do better) to 3 (strong). If students were strong on each item, their highest possible score would be a 12. The students’ mean score was 10.1, suggesting they believe they exhibit strong coursework habits in their current classes.

Personal growth factors encompassed growth in six elements: critical thinking; scientific reasoning and problem-solving; gaining new knowledge; commitment to life-long learning; engagement in the civic well-being of their community; and becoming more aware and tolerant of other people’s political, religious, and social views. Students were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1 (could do better) to 3 (strong), with the highest possible score being 18. The mean score for personal growth was 15.8, suggesting that students believed their college coursework helped them develop strong personal growth factors.

Finally, we asked students to rate themselves on four aspects related to personal characteristics: self-awareness, confidence, social competence, and sense of purpose. Students rated themselves on a scale of 1 (could do better) to 3 (strong). If students were strong on each item, their highest possible score would be a 12. The students’ mean score was 10.8, pointing to a sense that they demonstrate strong personal characteristics.

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<sup>46</sup> This is not meant to imply elimination of liberal arts courses.

**TABLE 6: Factors Related to Academic Coursework**

	<b>Number of Student Survey Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Student Survey Respondents</b>
<b>College is a Paid Module</b>		
Yes	108	32.8%
No	221	67.2%
<b>Access to College Advisers</b>		
Yes	256	76.2%
No	80	23.8%
<b>Access to Resources (Time, Space, Learning Materials) Outside of School Time</b>		
Yes	199	60.9%
No	128	39.1%
<b>Satisfaction and Personal Assessment Scores</b>		
Resource Access (mean) <i>Highest possible score: 20</i>	13.1	Generally satisfied
Coursework Habit (mean) <i>Highest possible score: 12</i>	10.1	Strong habits
Personal Growth (mean) <i>Highest possible score: 18</i>	15.8	Strong personal growth
Personal Characteristics (mean) <i>Highest possible score: 12</i>	10.8	Strong personal characteristics

There was little difference in how student subgroups rated themselves on the four scale variables (resources, coursework habits, personal growth, and personal characteristics). Whether examined by race and ethnicity, gender, age group, highest level of education, having taken college courses prior to being incarcerated, or other factors, students rated themselves as having strong coursework habits, strong personal growth factors, and strong personal characteristics.

### **Becoming a College Student behind Prison Walls: Inspirations and Aspirations**

Through their written responses, students shared their thoughts about their aspirations for and pathways into college. They also described the benefits and challenges of being a college student while incarcerated. Finally, they offered recommendations for how to advance higher education in prison. The following comment is characteristic of what many students expressed:

*I did not believe I would get in to the college program but I did and the experience has changed everything I understand about myself and the world. The college program has made my life fuller and more*



*rewarding ... Being in college has made me realize how much potential I threw away. It has also taught me about my capacity to change and made me realize how much I took from my victim when I took his life. I don't think most people consider these revelations when they talk/think about education in prison.*

As a whole, those students responding to the survey described higher education as a transformational experience: one described feeling like “a changed person,” and another felt confident “knowing I can persist to complete a course and a degree.” Higher education also tapped into an awareness and desire to be a community asset. Most students said that being a successful student means “being able to give back to the community.”

Many students aspired to take courses and/or complete a college degree to gain new skills in hopes of leading to better employment outcomes and helping them to stay out of prison. One student wrote:

*The college program has helped me “adjust” my long term goals for my career and future with my family. I now have a desire to help others and want to pursue a career in counseling, so I am majoring in social sciences.*

Some of the other comments offered by students completing the survey included: “I want to graduate and pursue my dreams to one day become a social worker/outreach worker and work with minority women” and “I want to get my master’s degree and find a career that I enjoy and where I can use my skills and gifts to make a living.”

Still another incentive that attracted incarcerated people to enroll in college programs was the prospect of Limited Time Credit Allowance (LCTA).<sup>47</sup> While such practical benefits were initially important motivating factors for some students, they emphasized that they soon came to appreciate the essential benefits of higher education academically and personally: “I wanted six months off my sentence ... I like [college]. It gives me something to do and I would like to keep going on the outside. I am a better person as far as dealing with other people and ideas. I love the way we motivate each other.” In short, pragmatic reasons were not the only incentive to attend college. Students were propelled by a strong desire to “be a contributing member of society,” “be a better person,” and “be able to give back.” An aspiration to go into human services was a commonly expressed goal.

Additionally, many individuals were motivated to enroll in college to make their families proud. For some, this means being a role model to their child. For others, it is about deepening their families’ respect and belief in them.

*I can honestly tell my eight-year-old son I'm in college and he always asks me how I am doing in school. I send him my grades and when I ask him if he wants to go to college he says “yes.” – Student*

*As a result of this college program, I have become a role model to my son. – Student*

*The college program has enhanced my family's hope for my future. It has strengthened my relationship with my family. – Student*

Most survey respondents stated that attending college gave them new self-esteem. They learned how to present themselves and how to understand diverse perspectives. Yet these incarcerated student respondents went far beyond the conventional understanding of the benefits of college. Many described how, for the first time during their incarceration, they were treated with dignity and respect for their individuality. In the classroom, they are more than just their Departmental Identification Number (DIN) or their last name – they are students with ideas to contribute and knowledge to share. More fundamentally, many students reported the benefit of “making use of their time”

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<sup>47</sup> LCTA is a provision available to eligible incarcerated people serving certain indeterminate or determinant sentences which allows six-months early release based on successful completion of “significant programmatic accomplishment.” This can include successful completion of two years of college programming. See New York State Corrections Law, Article 24, Section 803-b: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/COR/803-B>

and experiencing the college program as the most effective means of rehabilitation in prison. College programs can provide a respite from the otherwise punitive environment of prison: “The college program is the most enjoyable atmosphere of my incarceration. It is not mandatory and is removed ... Everyone who participates is there out of their own desire. It is the only time I am around positive people.”

## Challenges of Going to College in Prison

While the ability to attend college while incarcerated was clearly viewed as a life-changing opportunity, it was not without challenges. These challenges included the rigor of study and time management that are common to college students anywhere, but also impediments that are unique to prison. Incarcerated college students must learn to manage time and course responsibilities in a setting where activities are regimented and structured by DOCCS. Many feel challenged to take on college courses in addition to their required programming/work assignments. Survey respondents reported that it was difficult to find time to complete their out-of-class assignments, as their time is controlled essentially from 8 AM to 11 PM.

Survey respondents consistently pointed to the difficulty of completing coursework in an environment characterized by constant, overwhelming noise, which makes studying challenging. One student described it this way: “I feel as if I am trying to read while in the middle of trench warfare.” Noise seemed to be particularly problematic for students who resided in medium security facilities’ dormitory-style housing units with less privacy than the cell construction of maximum security prisons. As one respondent put it, “Noise is constant! The only time I can do my work is at sun-up (before everyone else wakes up).” Another respondent said he can only work at night in the dark, after lights out.

All environments, including prisons, have a set of norms and conventions that promote or sanction certain behaviors. Despite greater support for prison-based college programs, becoming a college student while incarcerated remains outside of the usual prison experience. Among the most poignant challenges identified by some of the incarcerated students who responded to the survey was that their pursuit of a college education in prison made them targets for harassment from both other incarcerated people and sometimes from correctional officers. Some of the students surveyed attributed harassment from their fellow prisoners to jealousy, while correctional officer harassment was considered to reflect resentment and/or a view that incarcerated people do not deserve to have access to college. These opinions were expressed in interviews with college program staff as well as with DOCCS education staff. Examples of reported difficulties with correctional officers included blocking students or college staff from classrooms for reasons that were unexplained or perceived as arbitrary. Survey respondents noted that delays deprived them of class time and could jeopardize accreditation as classes are minimally required to meet for a full “Carnegie Hour.”<sup>48</sup> At one location, students and staff reported that security personnel in the prison routinely delayed students for more than an hour.

*The officers delay the time when classes are supposed to start. We aren’t arriving at the school building until 7:30. Class starts at 6 PM and ends at 8:45. This forces the instructor to cram three hours into less than an hour and a half. Routinely, we are lucky if we get to meet for class for two hours in any given week. – Student*

While these perceptions run counter to the intention of official DOCCS policies, they nonetheless reflect the perspective of some students and staff and suggest opportunities for further training.

Both students and college program staff reported that they do not feel able to raise concerns about these practices, the official policies of DOCCS notwithstanding. Incarcerated students believed that responding to seemingly

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<sup>48</sup> [https://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc\\_id=168](https://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=168)  
Also see, <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/carnegie-unit-report.pdf>

arbitrary actions by corrections officers could result in a disciplinary ticket, which in turn could make them ineligible for the college program. Despite the presence of other DOCCS staff who believe that college programs make prisons safer and reduce overall disciplinary infractions and consider incarcerated students to be role models to other incarcerated individuals, students surveyed still described participating in college-in-prison programs as precarious:

*It can be hard because the other prisoners know that you will lose your college program if you get a ticket and they use that to threaten you. I live with constant stress and fear of being set-up by other inmates and by officers and also fear loss of the program for making a mistake or for something that is out of my control.*

Some of the students responding to the survey and college program staff interviewed thought that one cause of correctional officer harassment was misperceptions and resentment about the funding of college-in-prison programs. Several DOCCS educational staff reported that their some of their colleagues on the security side, as well as other civilian educational staff, openly express bitterness about incarcerated people's access to college when "they can't afford to send their own kids to college." During one visit to a college-in-prison program, a DOCCS teacher stated, "I am all for them going to college, but I think they should suffer like me. I am going to be paying off my student loans until the day I die, and they don't have to pay anything." These misperceptions abound despite New York State's myriad funding opportunities for low and middle income New Yorkers, like TAP and Excelsior, as well as federal Pell grants.

Additionally, most student survey respondents pointed out challenges related to maintaining academically sound college programs in prisons where the conditions of confinement directly impact the quality of education and impede access to standard resources. These conditions, arguably, threaten standards of higher education accreditation which require off-campus, degree-granting programs to offer equivalent resources to students that are available to students matriculating on traditional campuses. Examples of limitations faced by incarcerated students include a lack of access to professors and academic advisers outside of class, and a lack of access to current scholarly research materials or readings. Access to the internet is barred in New York State prisons, which is also a major limitation for incarcerated students.

Finally, survey respondents expressed a concern about a lack of academic choice. Typically, students enrolled in college-in-prison programs have access to limited majors and to one or two courses at a time that are decided by the college based on finances and instructor availability.

*They offer up to three courses per semester and the challenge is that sometimes you might only get one. It's the luck of the draw. Courses are taught at the availability of instructors. So it will take you three to five years to finish an AA. – Student*

*We have no say in what classes we are going to take. – Student*

They also expressed their concern about censorship and lack of academic freedom. Course materials must go through the DOCCS "media review" described in Chapter II; students surveyed expressed that the review restricted course material and detracted from the academic program.

*A lot of materials or courses get canceled because they are deemed a security risk. We should not have our education limited. – Student*

## **Student Recommendations**

Incarcerated students have a major stake in the future of college-in-prison programs. The recommendations offered by students who answered the survey offer important considerations as New York continues to build out its system

of college in prison. The most frequent recommendations shared by students fall into the following categories:

**Academic Offerings:**

- Increase diversity in course and degree options by offering degree programs that go beyond basic liberal arts or “general education”
- Create a media review process that does not limit academic freedom

**Academic Support:**

- Increase access to materials and resources needed to undertake rigorous academic work, such as updated research materials, information technology, and digital resources

**Academic Enrichment**

- Allow more learning exchange opportunities (with outside classes, speakers, and films)
- Develop/expand meaningful rituals to support student success (graduations, convocations, orientations, and the presence of school symbols)

**Higher Education Reentry Planning**

- Provide students with accurate and current information about college continuation on the outside, including reentry support related to academic persistence
- Provide hard copies of transcripts on a regular basis

## Insights from Interviews: Staff and Administrators of the College-in-Prison Providers and DOCCS

### Perspectives of College Administrators

The interviews with college-in-prison administrators and staff sought to explore the programs offered, the philosophy of the programs, daily program operations, student pathway options, and their experience of delivering higher education within New York prisons. Respondents were also asked for their recommendations on how to improve higher education in prison.

One of the major challenges of higher education in prison is balancing of the mission of higher education and the realities of the corrections environment.<sup>49</sup> The delivery of higher education within the prison context is regulated by DOCCS rules, policies, practices, and culture. Higher education within prisons must adapt to the fundamental function of the facility, particularly matters involving safety and security. As noted previously, security concerns require that all volunteers, which is the status under which academic faculty and staff are cleared to enter New York State correctional facilities, have to pass a DOCCS background check. Additionally, all materials used in the courses are screened prior to being allowed in the correctional facility, and can be barred if deemed a threat to the prison environment. The perceptions of correctional staff assigned to supervise day-to-day operations of college programs can carry a great deal of weight in determining what might be a security threat.

DOCCS’ emphasis on security and control is hard to align, and is sometimes incompatible, with the fundamental principles of higher education and academic freedom. Academic freedom means that faculty members and students can engage in intellectual debate without fear of censorship in materials used in coursework or fear of consequences for speech and writing associated with classes. In correctional institutions, some speech and writing might be construed as a risk to safety and security.

Thus, delivery of higher education in a prison setting requires a balancing of institutional missions and practices. As higher education programs are essentially “guests” in prisons, college programs must conform to DOCCS’ and

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<sup>49</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of this issue, see Drew, 2013.

facilities' policies and practices. A number of college program administrators interviewed indicated they compromised on issues of academic freedom in several ways, including modifying course titles and syllabi. Administrators also shared anecdotes of quashing and/or redirecting discussions on certain current affairs, such as the cases of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and other unarmed black men killed by police. Instructors appeared to be hypersensitive to how they handled classroom discussion in order not to jeopardize the good standing of the college in the prison. On one occasion, a college academic advisor who happened to be in the classroom, went so far as to erase terms written on the chalk board including "authority" and "power," fearing that the terminology would alarm corrections officers, even though all the terms were specific to the curriculum being covered. While this action was not required by DOCCS, it was an experience shared by the instructor with the researchers and is indicative of the uncertainty of what might be considered to violate DOCCS standards.

Additionally, the level of involvement of higher education administrators in their college-in-prison programs varies greatly. Programs affiliated with the more well-endowed private colleges and those participating in Second Chance Pell tend to have more interaction with college administrators. In the Pell Demonstration projects, the campus registrar or financial aid staff on the home campus have become more involved in supporting the needs of their college-in-prison program. Others are more removed from what transpires in the college program.

Our interviews with college program administrators buttressed student opinions and our observations that, even if not routine or official DOCCS policy, there were many issues that disrupted classroom learning. Some college program administrators observed that students were sometimes subjected to what they perceive as arbitrary or unjustified disciplinary tickets that could jeopardize a student's ability to continue with classes.

Another issue raised by college staff was the lack of reasonable access to academic supplies due to logistics and miscommunication. In one example described by a college staff member interviewed, students did not receive their math text books until three weeks into the semester and thus students could not keep up with homework assignments. The professor teaching the course insisted the books were shipped to the facility, but the facility said that it did not receive them. According to the staff member interviewed, the problem remained unresolved for some time and students were left in the lurch. Another barrier noted was scheduling conflicts where students must choose between scheduled class hours and commissary pick up times, which is their opportunity to get personal items and the supplies they need for school.

The college program administrators interviewed held varying views about the role of the DOCCS staff. Some appreciated their involvement, while others reported a lack of "buy in" to their program, which in turn made program operations more difficult. In some cases, the program's relationship with the Education Supervisor was either limited or not productive, leading the college program to find other DOCCS facility administrators to help secure the procedures and approvals needed to run the program.

A final theme that emerged from the program administrator interviews was concern about college program funding. There is a significant difference in the resources available to different college programs since every program is responsible for generating its own funding. Some programs receive more foundation funding. Similarly, they experience different levels of support from their home campuses. Administrators, particularly those affiliated with small, stand-alone programs, spoke of the strain of being overly reliant on support from a small number of donors. Staff from larger programs were more confident because they have been able to establish a more diverse portfolio of funds from various sources. Programs affiliated with well-endowed, independent colleges have access to unique financial opportunities via connections with alumni and the home institution's funding base. Other than the recent Pell Demonstration grants, none of the programs reported that they draw upon tuition paid by students to support the in-prison programs. The College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative, which is part of the District Attorney of New York's Criminal Justice Improvement Initiative (CJII), committed to funding seven of the colleges in a demonstration pilot

that was scheduled to begin as the research for this report was concluding. Other than that, there is little governmental funding of college in New York State prisons.

The stability of financing is also a factor of the level of administrative and political support from college leadership. Community college-affiliated programs in particular depend on leadership support of their college administrators who are the chief emissaries to local county governments. According to interviews with several community college program staff, while the in-prison program exemplifies the open access and service mission of the community college, more politically conservative counties may be more skeptical of in-prison college education. As one of the program administrators said, “We have a fragile existence. Right now, the current administration is supportive. But it is important to not make too much of a splash.”

## Perspectives of DOCCS Staff

In turn, DOCCS administrators and staff have their own views and concerns about college programs. In this section, we are uniformly referring to Education Supervisors as “s/he” to protect their confidentiality. While college staff express frustration over what they consider to be overly restrictive criteria regarding curricula and materials, DOCCS staff consider college program staff to lack awareness or respect for the safety measures required in the facility. Related to this, one Education Supervisor thought that the college program did not provide material for the Media Committee with enough time for their review. The Committee only met twice a month and was described as short-staffed. As a result, this Education Supervisor thought that some of the material did not get an adequate review. Several DOCCS Education Supervisors were also troubled by their inability to have more direct contact with the college program operating in the prison due to scheduling conflicts: most college-in-prison programs operate at night and Educational Supervisors typically work during the day.

Many DOCCS staff interviewed noted that the level of support for college-in-prison programs varies, and the extent to which there is support or opposition within the facility affects programs. One Educational Supervisor admitted that initially s/he was not a fan of offering college courses in prison and was skeptical of their value. However, s/he reconsidered this opinion after seeing the program in operation, stating, “By the second semester of watching the program here I didn’t think that anymore. Now I think these guys are having a great experience. They like it and they are getting something out of it.”

Not all DOCCS staff shift their skeptical attitudes. One Education Supervisor commented during the interview that security staff engaged in actions that affected the learning environment and caused anxiety among college program staff and students alike. Other Education Supervisors said that the hostility was not limited to security staff; other program-related staff also are not always supportive. One stated, “I know in their hearts they see the value of the college program but over time, they become just as punitive in their thinking as the security staff.” According to one Education Supervisor interviewed, DOCCS staff can impede a person’s ability to participate in college courses by assigning them to programs/work that take precedence over classes, or by scheduling commissary at a time that conflicts with classes, such that the incarcerated person has to choose between the two. Another Education Supervisor stated during the interview that s/he has tried to explain the value of college education programs to other DOCCS staff in the prison, particularly to counter misinformation about the cost of the programs, with little success.

Our interviews also revealed different roles and responsibilities assumed by Educational Supervisors. In one instance, the Education Supervisor described his/her role as one of a gatekeeper, commenting that s/he selected the incarcerated people for the program and thought this was sensible as s/he had worked for DOCCS for many years and had developed a sense of who would be good for their program and who would not. S/he also offered that s/he was reluctant to select older incarcerated people for the program as s/he did not think they would benefit. Another Education Supervisor saw him/herself as the “middle man” between the college and faculty. His/her role was outreach and screening of interested incarcerated people; the college does the selection of students. The Education Supervisor also distributed books and materials that are used in the classes.

There were different perspectives expressed during the interviews about the perceived interest on the part of prison administrators. For example, one Education Supervisor thought his/her Superintendent was an enthusiastic supporter of the college-in-prison program, while another commented that the administration was aware of the program, but s/he did not think the Superintendent was particularly interested in it.

Several Education Supervisors had observations and recommendations for improvement that are directly aligned with comments from college program staff and the incarcerated students. These recommendations included:

- Allocate more/better equipped classroom space
- Strive for more diversity in course subjects
- Increase access to research/study material, including technology
- Create protocols to avoid conflicting obligations and responsibility that stand in the way of college (e.g., work assignments, medication call out)

## Site Observations

Observations provided a glimpse into the daily operations of higher education programs within each prison facility including interactions among staff employed by the college programs, DOCCS personnel, and incarcerated students. We particularly focused on classroom observations to get a sense of how college-level education is delivered behind prison walls.

We observed courses taught both during the day and at night. Most of the courses observed were part of a degree program but two classes visited were delivered for credit in non-degree programs. One of these non-degree courses was an inside-out program where students from the main campus attend classes in the prison alongside incarcerated college students. The other was a program that enrolled students within two to three years of release to begin earning credits toward a degree that can be completed once released.

We visited a variety of classes including liberal arts courses, business-oriented classes, and courses that could lead to a professional or specialized degree. These are not necessarily distinct classifications: subject matter does overlap. Examples of the courses include public health and mental health related courses, such as Epidemiology and Psychology, humanities, such as Contemporary American Literature, social science such as Public Policy, and arts-related classes such as Music Keyboarding. Despite the lack of access to labs and computers, there were science/math-related courses as well, such as Scientific Writing and Business Accounting.

Most of the courses observed were intellectually rigorous and participatory. There were, however, some classrooms where discussion was more restrained. The factors that appeared to contribute to a less engaged classrooms were the “maturity” of the program (i.e., how long a program had been in operation) and absence of pre-college preparation assistance for students. Newer programs have yet to develop a culture of college-in-prison programs. The lack of experience in how to teach a college class in a prison environment and how to be a student behind the walls appear to contribute to the more muted classroom environment.

Our observations of classes also provided a first-hand opportunity to learn how DOCCS’ focus on security and control was balanced with the traditions associated with the college classroom. With two exceptions, most observed classes took place without any interference from DOCCS staff. Corrections officers were always near (usually at the end of a hallway) but were “hands-off” while classes were in session. They would occasionally walk by and look into the windows, but otherwise left the class undisturbed. The exception was when students under age 21 are in the classroom, due to a DOCCS policy mandating that a DOCCS staff person be present in this circumstance. We observed such a situation: the officer stood in the back of the room the entire class. We did not ask the students or the teacher whether or not the officer’s presence had any impact on the classroom discussion and so do not draw any conclusions about this.

On another occasion, we observed one group of students who were prevented from entering their classroom for more than an hour and a half past the scheduled start time for the class. Both the college staff and DOCCS educational staff report that this kind of delay was a routine occurrence at this particular facility. The college instructors and staff believe they have no recourse; they fear that reporting what they consider to be unwarranted actions by corrections staff would jeopardize the entire program. While the college administrator was able to arrange study hall hours to replace the missed class in this case, it was not certain that students would be able to attend because of other required programming. As one college administrator interviewed concluded, “Students are often cheated in terms of their classroom time.”

In terms of our site visit observations, the two above-described examples were exceptions, but are worth considering given the frequency with which the concern was voiced by incarcerated students and college program staff. Except for late starts, most classes observed operated just like any college class on campus. We watched how students interacted with one another, with the instructor, and how they engaged with course material. We saw a student body that was diverse, committed to learning, well-prepared for their course work, and fully participating in the classes. The students also engaged with one another with respect and posed questions to each other and the instructor that sparked critical dialogue. While this is certainly the aspiration in any college classroom, faculty teaching in prisons often commented that incarcerated students far out-performed typical campus students. Faculty reported that incarcerated students come better prepared than their counterparts on campus, more often having completed the class readings and assignments. This sentiment comports with findings from other research about the experience of faculty working in prisons (Owens-Murphy, Purser, & Williams 2017; Berry 2017).

## The Physical Setting of Classrooms

All the programs we observed operate out of classroom space that is typically shared with other DOCCS educational programming, often DOCCS high school equivalency programs. The location, size, and quality of classrooms were diverse, with program space varying between one and four classrooms. Even so, the lack of sufficient space was a common problem reported across facilities.

With respect to the physical attributes, more than half of the classrooms had windows to the outside and all of them had a large window on a corridor where corrections officers routinely pass and observe for security purposes.

Most rooms used by college programs were well-lit and sufficient in size for a group of 18-20 students. However, two programs operated in poor conditions, such as a dimly lit basement wing or a building subject to disruptive and sometimes deafening noise. Also, on two occasions, we observed classrooms that were filled or overflowing. This created friction with corrections officers over possible overcrowding, followed by a discussion about whether it was necessary to move the class to a larger room. This sort of last-minute change is not easily accommodated in a prison setting as such changes generally require prior approval from the prison administration. Space/scheduling challenges were also observed in prisons with multiple college programs that were expected to share the same classroom space.

The better situated college-in-prison programs operated in spaces dedicated specifically for the college classes. During site observations (as well as mentioned in student survey responses), having designated space seems to foster student pride in being a part of the college program. The students enrolled in these more self-contained programs displayed a better defined identity as students of that college. While pointing to the space and referencing the collegial relationship he had with other students, one student stated, “I don’t feel like I am in prison when I am here.” Seemingly trivial considerations, like type of room and condition of the classroom, appear to have considerable impact on student engagement. In most of the cases where the college program had its own space, the programs were able to invest their own resources to add tables and chairs, and decorate rooms, including painting the college colors or placing a college and/or program logo on the wall.



## Academic Support Resources

Important academic support resources include access to appropriate library materials, information technology, space and time to study or work on group projects, access to tutorial support, and academic advisement. Academic advisors in college-in-prison programs advise students about course selection (even if limited) and provide information about higher education options both in prisons and in the community. They also answer questions concerning alignment of degrees to the job market and support the students in obtaining records of academic completion.

Space (discussed above) is an important resource for college-in-prison programs. One of the more established consortium programs was able to utilize a large, open room which they transformed into a multi-purpose area used for academic support and program office space. We observed this space bustling with students working on computers, using library resources, and working collaboratively with other students and/or tutors. The space is also used for college program staff and faculty to meet with students. Administrators and students of this program alike commented that the space significantly contributed to the program's success.

This college program's long history in the prison enabled it to create and maintain the sort of space that could support a broad range of academic pursuits. The longevity allowed the program to build a strong relationship with the prison administration. DOCCS facility staff and administrators consider the college program to be a positive asset that improves the reputation of their facility. While we did not see similar space available in any other programs, we did observe that college programs with stronger relationships with the prison administration often had larger and better quality space in which to operate their programs.

Some of the college programs have been able to install their own library for use by their students. These libraries varied significantly in how comprehensive they were and how current the material and resources are. For example, two programs had rooms lined with large bookshelves filled with books and academic materials. In contrast, a library in one program amounted to a small shelf containing a few three-ring binders with outdated photocopied articles. Some programs were completely without any library resources. The lack of library materials and access to current scholarship was frequently cited by students as a barrier to their ability to complete research assignments. The major barriers to improving library resources are lack of funding and staff to curate resources, and the restrictive guidelines used in the review process to ensure that media/materials are not labeled a security risk. Library resources, just like all textbooks, other reading materials, and videos, must be screened and approved by the corrections officials.

There are other academic supports available to students attending college in a community setting that foster academic learning outside of the classroom. "Study halls," a common feature in campus settings, could also be important to incarcerated students as spaces where they could complete assignments without the noise and other distractions of the prison environment. However, only a few programs have access and arrangements with the facility to utilize such space. Additionally, even when such space exists, students typically must "put themselves on a call-out," which is the process of asking permission to move from one's housing unit to another location in the prison. It also requires availability of DOCCS security staff to be in proximity to the "study hall" space. This creates a demand for staff that the facility may have difficulty meeting. In order to make use of the space, incarcerated students must plan ahead and await permission from DOCCS authorities. Moreover, according to students and college program administrators, the student risks disciplinary reprisals by corrections officers if for some reason they do not use their call out. This could jeopardize the student's continued enrollment because as noted previously, disciplinary tickets could lead to students being removed from the college program.

Finally, only a few programs were able to develop academic tutorial supports such as community volunteers, campus-based graduate students, and incarcerated graduates of the program. This type of support was sparse or unavailable to most programs but was thought to be important to help current students master the subject matter.

## A Note about Computers and Technology

Computer literacy, including the ability to access information via the internet, is essential to life in the 21st century. Almost all jobs, whether entry level or managerial, have some expectation of the ability to use computers. Word processing programs, spread sheets, and email are basic skills for most jobs. The typical college student in the community uses computers to take notes, prepare essays and term papers, and conduct research.

The prison environment is a stark contrast to this digital world. In most cases, incarcerated students do all their coursework with pen and paper, submitting handwritten reports. Even where there are computers, many students still have to handwrite reports on paper as there are not enough functioning terminals and printers. Everything is submitted in hard copy because there is no internet access for electronic transmission of assignments or exams.

When we did site visits in 2017, only five out of the 15 programs had some number of computers for the students enrolled in their classes, and they were frequently limited and outdated. In some cases, programs had been told by DOCCS that there are a range of challenges that make it difficult to support a computer lab. A lack of funding to incorporate information technology (IT) and ongoing computer maintenance also stands in the way of providing computer resources. Only one program has established computer labs at all facilities where it operates and has an assigned staff member who travels to all sites to maintain those labs.

Computer labs that do exist are subject to DOCCS' restrictions that specifically prohibit access to the internet. Computers are typically loaded with basic word processing software and sometimes have software affiliated with a course, like math or foreign language. In some cases, instructors are also able to load course-related videos. One or two of the programs with proper hardware and IT support have been able to purchase subscriptions to static (non-networked) archives of scholarly journal databases (such as JSTOR, a digital library that contains back issues of many academic journals). This allows students to search and read abstracts, but they are not able to access full text articles available through the internet. All the software accessible to students must be approved by DOCCS. Students are only allowed to use the computers for coursework, typically during class time. Printers are often located in restricted areas and the materials that are printed are reviewed by DOCCS staff to make sure students are not printing things that are unrelated to coursework.

## Administrative Support

College-in-prison programs require a substantial amount of administrative work, which is beyond the capacity of faculty members in teaching positions. Some better-resourced programs are able to hire staff to provide administrative support. Some programs secure facility approval to engage incarcerated men and women as administrative clerks. The administrative work includes tasks associated with the routine operation of the program inside the facility (arranging call-outs, recording attendance, and distributing course materials) as well as on campus (managing financial aid, providing academic advisement and transcripts, and ordering books and supplies). While this kind of support is critical and contributes to both student success and the workability of a program, it is not uniformly available across programs and facilities.

## Conclusion

Our interviews, survey, and observations provided rich detail on the operations, successes, and challenges of providing higher education programs in prison. In short, there is considerable endorsement of the value of college programs for incarcerated individuals and the prison facilities. There are significant variations in how the programs operate, some of which are due to the vibrant diversity of college program philosophy and purpose, but others due to differential resources and support of college and differences in leadership among prisons. The information gleaned from our detailed look at college-in-prison programs directly informs the recommendations offered in Chapter V regarding opportunities to strengthen and expand higher education in prison.

## V. Opportunities for Advancing Higher Education in Prison

Much of what we learned through interviews, surveys, and observations confirms the essential role of college-in-prison programs and New York State's admirable efforts to sustain and expand these programs, even in the face of challenging funding barriers. While New York State should celebrate the efforts to preserve and develop higher education in programs, there remain opportunities to further this work. We conclude this report with suggestions for how to strengthen and expand college-in-prison programs with ideas that are aspirational, but with a commitment from DOCCS, institutions of higher education, and policymakers, are also achievable.

The data we examined in the course of producing this report underscore that college in prison is quite simply one of the most reliably rehabilitative activities offered. Higher education offers tremendous benefits to individuals, families, and communities. This is no less so when those individuals are incarcerated; when family connections take place through visits, phone calls, and letters; and when the community exists behind bars. As discussed in the introduction, higher education contributes to an improved prison environment, can be a mechanism for incarcerated people to be positive role models for families outside, and is transformative for the incarcerated students themselves. The information provided by students speaks to the fundamental value of education, i.e., the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds. It is a consciousness-expanding experience. College-in-prison programs also contribute to public safety, as demonstrated by data that show recidivism rates for individuals who take college classes and/or earn a degree are far lower than the rates for people who do not have this opportunity. College-in-prison programs provide opportunities for incarcerated people to become contributors to their families, communities, and society.

The recommendations below represent the ideas we heard from correctional staff, college program staff, and students. They reflect the key conclusions as follows:

- College programs are valued by DOCCS administrators as an asset to the prison environment, by college programs administrators and faculty as an opportunity to realize the college mission, and by students as the most productive way to serve their sentence and ultimately as a life-changing opportunity.
- College-in-prison programs have benefitted from the entrepreneurial spirit of their founders and, when viewed collectively, offer choices and options that meet the diverse needs and interests of their students.
- There are differences among programs in resources that are critical to running an effective program, including funding, access to space, library materials, computer labs, and study space.
- Differences in leadership support – both in each prison and in each participating college – also affect the operation of college-in-prison programs.
- Student access to college-in-prison programs is heavily dependent on chance, i.e., whether the incarcerated person is assigned to a prison with a college program and whether it has open seats, rather than being a function of their educational interests and aspirations regardless of where they are incarcerated.

Based on the above findings, we offer suggestions for how to build on the progress made by DOCCS, colleges, and policymakers. These are organized according to which stakeholder has primary responsibility or authority to move the particular agenda item. These recommendations are intended to complement the tremendous work done so far and the diversity of programs offered. The suggestions are built on the promising practices we have observed that most respond to the needs of students, college administrators and faculty, and DOCCS.

### Opportunities for DOCCS

New York State's criminal justice system has undergone tremendous change in the past decade, including reform of the Rockefeller drug laws, use of evidence-based assessment tools to guide parole release decisions,

and the creation of the statewide Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration. In 2006, the State Legislature amended Penal Law §1.05[6] to explicitly state that “the promotion of their successful and productive reentry and reintegration into society” is a core goal of any sentence, including sentences that carry a term of incarceration. Under the amended law, increased significance is placed on breaking the cycle of recidivism by imposing sentences of a length and type that will promote successful reintegration and increase public safety. Facilitating college-in-prison programs is perhaps the most effective way to contribute to this goal. DOCCS has been a strong ally and supporter of college-in-prison programs, welcoming programs into their facilities. The suggestions below build on the work that has already been done.

#### **Assessment & Assignment**

- Expand the educational assessments conducted by DOCCS during DOCCS intake to capture all educational information, including educational aspirations, and, to the extent possible, use the results to inform assigning incarcerated people to prisons that have the appropriate educational services.<sup>50</sup>
- Continue to consider an incarcerated person’s educational needs and progress in their assignment to facilities and to programs. Persons ready and interested in higher education should be sent to prisons with programs that align with the incarcerated person’s interests and needs.<sup>51</sup>
- Continue its efforts to ensure that college prep classes and higher education programs are available in all of its facilities to everyone who seeks the opportunity and can do the work. This means that some of the programs must be degree-granting to be responsive to people facing long periods of incarceration.

#### **Documentation & Data Collection**

- Continue and expand collection of baseline data on the educational levels of individuals at intake into DOCCS to measure educational growth during incarceration.
- Document the use of educational assessment information in assigning people to prison following intake into DOCCS and track the enrollment and achievement of students in those programs over time.
- Establish metrics for evaluating the performance of the college providers.
- Continue to perform analyses of recidivism rates and expand outcome measures beyond recidivism to include “quality of life” metrics. To the extent possible, analyze the impact of higher education by comparing those who participated in a prison-based college program and those who did not participate in such programs.
- Make this data public and periodically review this data with stakeholders as a basis for continual improvement of the system.

#### **Training and Support for Correctional Staff to Promote Support and “Buy In”**

- Include information about college programs in basic training and orientation of new staff, as well as in regular in-service training to staff. The information should include the benefits of higher education to the management and environment of correctional facilities, the benefits to incarcerated students, the benefits to public safety, and specific information about college-in-prison programs. It should also include information on financial assistance for college that may be available to DOCCS staff and their families.
- Periodically conduct special trainings about college programs to update staff on new program options and procedures.
- Include DOCCS staff who support higher education in prison to educate their co-workers.
- Promote tuition reimbursement in the community as a DOCCS employee benefit that covers higher education.

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<sup>50</sup> There are other considerations that DOCCS must consider in making prison assignments. Examples of some factors that are considered are health and mental health needs and the need for special education services.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

- Train parole officers about the benefits of higher education, as well as the demands on students and ways in which parole supervision can be structured to support college success.
- Invite correctional staff to college graduations and other program achievements that take place in their facility, and feature them as contributors to the program success.

#### **Supervise and Facilitate Access to College Programs**

- Designate appropriate, accessible space for the college program, including classroom, study/advising, computer, and library space.
- Ensure access to materials and resources used by incarcerated students in pursuit of their education, including computers, printers, books, and research journals.
- Provide direction to correctional officers so that they do not arbitrarily impede access to classes or opportunities to study.
- Ensure that all college programs are accessible to interested individuals, regardless of where they are incarcerated or other factors.
- Assist current and prospective students in obtaining academic records and documentation (secondary education credentials, transcripts from post-secondary institutions, selective service registration checks) that will help them access college in the community.

#### **Rejuvenate the Temporary Release Educational Leave Program**

- Educational release is a Temporary Release Program that allows an incarcerated person to attend school in the community, including college, for up to 14 hours per day.
- This is a gradual reintroduction of freedom in a supportive environment, which includes a community of students, faculty, and administrators. This also facilitates a pro-social community, and encourages positive use of leisure time.
- Educational release can be an effective tool in reentry preparation and facilitate the continuation of college education once released.

## **Opportunities for Colleges**

Higher education is essential in 21st-century America both for the individual and for society as a whole – and this is especially true for incarcerated people. Making higher education accessible to people in prison has utilitarian benefits such as increasing employability and reducing recidivism and, of equal or greater importance, preserving democracy. The engagement of colleges and universities in prison-based programs is aligned with the mission and purpose of higher education, which is to make this valuable opportunity available to people from all walks of life. This is particularly true for public institutions. Through college-in-prison initiatives, college institutions enhance diversity that is so critical to higher education.

#### **Administrative & Resource Support**

- Provide adequate staff support to college-in-prison programs both in the prison and in the community to ensure the needed communication with the appropriate facility-based staff and to provide routine administrative support to faculty and students.
- Train and engage campus-based college staff responsible for financial aid, registrar, and transcript assistance to prepare them to work with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students.
- Offer a tuition waiver to DOCCS employees who play instrumental roles in facilitating access to higher education in prison (e.g., similar to the practices of granting tuition waivers to human service organizations that accept and supervise interns).

### **Academic Support**

- Offer developmental or college readiness classes to prepare people for college.
- Offer pre-release education planning, delivered by college staff with expertise in admissions policies and practices, such as admissions staff, staff of opportunity programs, and staff of student life services. Doing so will increase the likelihood of students continuing their education in the community.
- Partner with community organizations that can help with reentry – both social services (housing, health and mental health services, employment etc.) and educational planning (e.g., College Initiative, College and Community Fellowship) – so that a student knows where to seek assistance in preparation for and after release.

## **Shared Opportunities for DOCCS and Colleges**

DOCCS and college-in-prison programs have already built strong and effective partnerships that have allowed higher education to be offered to people incarcerated in 25 prisons in New York State. The cooperative relationships have built bridges between two distinct institutional systems and supported diverse program models. Further collaboration can preserve the vibrancy of approaches while ensuring that promising practices are shared across programs and facilities for the benefit of all incarcerated students. DOCCS and higher education programs can work together for funding to support new initiatives and new ways of documenting the successes of college-in-prison programs.

### **SUNY-Specific**

- Given the relative geographic proximity of SUNY two- and four-year institutions to DOCCS facilities, particularly those in Central, Western, and Northern New York, SUNY should undertake an evaluation of what it would take to expand into prisons that lack college programs.

### **Networking/Learning Communities**

- Engage college providers, perhaps through the New York Consortium of Higher Education in Prison (NYCHEP), in planning the annual DOCCS-college provider meeting.
- Explore ways to provide and/or expand student access to electronic academic resources that are available to campus students. Examples of such resources include JSTOR digital library, Blackboard educational technology, and limited internet access.
- Offer informational sessions for correctional staff to inform them about college opportunities, including financial aid for themselves and/or their children.
- Develop reentry capacity among staff of higher education institutions so that reentry educational planning can be aligned with the requirements and challenges faced by newly released people. Information to be shared includes parole requirements, curfews, obtaining identification and related documents, and general adjustments, so that colleges and universities can better serve people on parole and DOCCS can consider a parolee's educational requirements and opportunities when setting conditions of parole.
- Review college admission policies and enrollment practices to ensure a welcoming campus environment for formerly incarcerated students. Collaborate with community-based organizations working on reentry and specifically higher education.

### **College Program – DOCCS Agreements**

- In the agreements with DOCCS and colleges, include information about the following:
  - Resources to be provided by the college administrators and faculty, including enrollment assistance, course and major advising, financial aid, registration, teaching, and materials;
  - Resources to be provided by the DOCCS facility, including space, appropriate/trained staff, and access to DOCCS educational services staff;

- Agreement to offer credit-bearing courses;
- Agreement on transfer of college credits among and between college-in-prison programs;
- Agreement to accept academically qualified students to home campus upon release, such as existed in and around 1981 as part of the Unified College Program.

#### **Documentation & Data Collection<sup>52</sup>**

- DOCCS and college programs should collaborate to standardize data collection and reporting, including data on:
  - Number of students who applied;
  - Number accepted;
  - Number rejected by reason of rejection;
  - Number placed on waiting list;
  - Number transferred (by reason for transfer, e.g., educational transfer);
  - Number earning credits and the number of credits earned;
  - Number earning degree by type of degree;
  - Number matriculating into home campus upon release;
  - Number matriculating into other colleges.
- Produce and disseminate an annual report that includes the above-listed data along with the educational assessment and recidivism data collected by DOCCS.

#### **Course & Program Offerings**

- Diversify course offerings, and address space and appropriate security mechanisms so that colleges can also offer different majors, including humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.
- Ensure that all incarcerated students have access to college programs regardless of time to release by allowing and sustaining different program models, i.e., reentry model programs that target people closer to release and degree-granting models that offer opportunities for people serving longer sentences.

### **Opportunities for Policymakers**

Policymakers, particularly elected officials, are in the best position to support and expand higher education in prison. In doing so, policymakers will be forwarding agendas important to all residents of New York State: public safety, development of social and human capital, ensuring all people have the opportunity to become educated, and strengthening democracy. Policymakers can play a leadership role in building public support for college-in-prison programs. For example, legislators can:

- Support public funding for higher education programs in prison. The New York State Legislature should restore TAP eligibility to incarcerated students, as this would be the simplest and clearest mechanism to fund college education. Historically, the use of TAP proved to be successful, i.e., available to qualified individuals and easy for colleges to administer. If this is not politically viable in the immediate term, alternative public funding should be available to ensure the continuity, if not expansion, of the existing array of effective programs.

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<sup>52</sup> Colleges and DOCCS would need to develop policies to ensure the sharing of information is done in compliance with FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). This may be done with student consent. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to certain specified parties or under certain specified conditions that may apply such as audit or evaluation purposes (34 CFR § 99.31).

- Engage legislative committees and executive departments concerned with health, employment, economic development, and, of course, education, in efforts to expand college-in-prison programs and establish higher education focused reentry services in communities. Make funding available to build a network of higher education-focused reentry supports in the community.
- Join with national efforts urging the restoration of federal Pell grants to formerly incarcerated students.
- Convene and/or participate in public events that demonstrate to the people of New York State that college education in prison is an excellent investment and an effective way to enhance public safety.

## Conclusion

Higher education should play a central role in the New York State corrections system based on the myriad benefits that accrue when incarcerated people can access college programs. There is much that can be done to advance access to higher education. Fortunately, New York State has a strong foundation upon which to build out these opportunities.



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# Appendix I: College-in-Prison Program Descriptions

Information gathered during summer and fall of 2017 and confirmed with college provider in fall of 2017.

## Bard Prison Initiative (BPI)

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Max Kenner</b>, Executive Director  <b>Megan Callaghan</b>, Director of Academics and Administration  <b>Jed Tucker</b>, Director of Reentry and Alumni Affairs</p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:bpi@bard.edu">bpi@bard.edu</a>  <b>Bard College:</b> 30 Campus Rd, Annandale-On-Hudson, NY 12504</p>
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://bpi.bard.edu/">http://bpi.bard.edu/</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Coxsackie Correctional Facility / Coxsackie, NY 12051-0200  (male maximum security, pop approximately 900)</p> <p>Eastern Correctional Facility / Napanoch, NY 12458-0338  (male maximum security, pop approximately 891)</p> <p>Fishkill Correctional Facility / Beacon, NY 12508-0307  (male medium security, pop approximately 1429)</p> <p>Green Haven Correctional Facility / Stormville, NY 12582-0100  (male maximum security, pop approximately 1941)</p> <p>Taconic Correctional Facility / Bedford Hills, NY 10507-2497  (female medium security, pop approximately 293)</p> <p>Woodbourne Correctional Facility / Woodbourne, NY 12788-1000  (male medium security, pop approximately 805)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled 2016-2017:</b>
300
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
160 (across six prisons)
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
Comprehensive liberal arts and science curriculum
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
AA and BA
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
As of Spring 2017, 443 degrees awarded

**Admissions Requirement:**

Admission to the associate degree program is open to anyone with a high school diploma or the equivalent. The process is two-part: a written essay and an interview. Students who complete all requirements for the associate degree are then eligible to apply to the bachelor's degree program.

**Financing:**

Throughout BPI's history, funding has been almost exclusively private (donations from individual donors and grants from philanthropic foundations), but Bard is now also participating in Second Chance Pell and the District Attorney of New York's College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative. There are no costs to students.

**Overview:**

BPI was established in 2001 as an extension of Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. Since then BPI has enrolled over 850 men and women in full-time college degree programs in the liberal arts and sciences.

BPI offers both associate in arts and bachelor of arts degrees through a curriculum that adheres closely to that of the college's main campus. Classes are seminar-style and emphasize careful reading and reasoned argument. To earn their associate degrees, students take a wide range of courses in subject areas including anthropology, biology, computer science, history, languages, literature, mathematics, philosophy, political studies, and public health. For their bachelor's degrees, they enroll in advanced B.A. seminars and begin to focus more specifically on areas of expertise. After moderating into a major, each student spends a year working on a substantial *Senior Project* on a topic designed, researched, and written in consultation with faculty.

College writing is prioritized throughout both the associate and bachelor's degree programs. In their first two years with the college, students take at least 24 credits of academic writing courses. BPI's curriculum combines high standards with extensive academic support, and all students meet with faculty academic advisors and tutors.

**Additional Resources:**

BPI has a substantial reentry program committed to continuing support for alumni returning home. More than 500 BPI alumni have left prison, and most live in or around New York City. BPI offers comprehensive guidance and logistical support for their transition to life outside of prison, with a focus on education, housing, and employment. As part of its career development network, BPI partners with businesses and nonprofits to create paid fellowship and internship opportunities.

The BPI Consortium is active in 15 states across the country, partnering with colleges and universities to transform educational opportunities both inside correctional facilities and post-release.

## Bedford Hills College Program

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
Aileen M. Baumgartner, Director of Bedford Hills Program ( <a href="mailto:abaumgartner@mmm.edu">abaumgartner@mmm.edu</a> ) Rachel Bernard, Assistant Director ( <a href="mailto:rbernard@mmm.edu">rbernard@mmm.edu</a> )
<b>Marymount Manhattan College</b> , 221 East 71st Street, New York, NY 10021
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://www.mmm.edu/academics/bedford-hills-college-program.php">http://www.mmm.edu/academics/bedford-hills-college-program.php</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
Bedford Hills Correctional Facility / Bedford Hills, New York 10507-2400 (Female maximum security, pop approximately 767) Bedford Hill Correctional Facility is the only maximum security prison in New York State for women.  <i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled:</b>
170 students
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
15-17 per semester
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
Liberal arts curriculum with a social science concentration
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
AA in Social Science BA in Sociology
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
As of 2017, 61 BA degrees and 161 AA degrees
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent and must be in good standing with discipline and completion of other required correctional programming. They must also complete a questionnaire and an assessment test.
<b>Financing:</b>
Private and recipient of Second Chance Pell funding. Students are required to pay \$5 in tuition per semester.
<b>Overview:</b>
The Bedford Hills College Program (BHCP) was founded in the spring of 1997 to offer women incarcerated at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility the ability to earn a college degree. The Bedford Hill College Program is run through Marymount Manhattan College (MMC), which grants students the credits and degrees for the program. Instructors are from an array of higher education institutions including Bank Street College, Barnard College, Columbia University, Manhattan College, Manhattanville College, Pace University, Sarah Lawrence College, SUNY Purchase, and Union Theological Seminary.
<b>Additional Resources:</b>
BHCP operates from a large resource room (referred to the “Learning Center”) inside the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. Dedicated for the use of college students, the Learning Center houses a library, provides open space with large tables for either independent or group study, space for instructors or tutors to meet with students, and a computer lab. The space is available to students to use throughout the day.
Students who do not pass the entrance exam are offered remedial support (provided by volunteer tutors) to help them prepare for retaking the entrance exam and for matriculating into credit-bearing courses.



## Bennington College – Prison Education Initiative (PEI)

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<b>Annabel Davis-Goff, Director, Prison Education Initiative</b> ( <a href="mailto:adavis-goff@bennington.edu">adavis-goff@bennington.edu</a> ) <b>Aila West</b> , Assistant Director, Prison Education Initiative ( <a href="mailto:awest@bennington.edu">awest@bennington.edu</a> )
<b>Bennington College:</b> One College Drive, Bennington, VT 05201-6003
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://www.bennington.edu/center-advancement-of-public-action/prison-education-initiative">http://www.bennington.edu/center-advancement-of-public-action/prison-education-initiative</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
Great Meadow Correctional Facility/ Comstock, NY 12821-0051 (male maximum security, pop approximately 1,498)
<i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled (most recent four semesters):</b>
In the Spring 2017 semester there were 31 students in the Bennington College PEI program: 20 were taking credit-bearing courses and 11 were in college prep courses. There are 42 students enrolled for Fall 2017: 32 are taking credit-bearing courses and 10 in college prep.
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
Approximately five courses offered, two to three per semester
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
Humanities: literature, social science research, American history, social psychology, political theory, history of thought, math. Planned courses for the future: computer science, Latin, writing, European history, philosophy.
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
Credit-bearing courses/no degree
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
N/A
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent. They must have a good disciplinary record in the facility, cannot have a Tier II or III sex offense conviction, and must be eligible for release.
<b>Financing:</b>
Most costs for the Bennington PEI program are covered by private funding. Bennington was selected as one of 67 higher education institutions nationally to participate in the federal Second Chance Pell Experiment program. These funds cover the tuition cost of a limited number of students who meet Pell requirements.
<b>Overview:</b>
Bennington College is a private liberal arts college located in Bennington, Vermont. Bennington College began the Prison Education Initiative in the Fall 2015. Through this program Bennington provides college prep and credit-bearing courses to people currently incarcerated at Great Meadow Correctional Facility. It is located a little more than 50 miles from the college – just across the Vermont-New York border.
Students who are accepted into the credit-bearing program take one to three courses per semester depending on level of academic proficiency. Students accepted into the college prep program have the opportunity after completion to transition to the credit-bearing program though faculty evaluation.

The Bennington program is closely affiliated with the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI). Bennington is offering the required core curriculum for entry level students (meeting the minimum Bard requirements for the first year curriculum). Students can earn up to 32 credits. Although there is no guarantee that Bard will accept any given students or that DOCCS will allow for a transfer to a facility with a BPI program, successful completion of PEI credits will prepare students to transfer to a four-year BPI degree program. Thus, the Bennington PEI objective is to prepare students for completion of a high quality liberal arts college degree.

**Additional Resources:**

PEI provides its students with extra educational support via a tutorial class available once a week. Students can attend for support on coursework and the time is sometimes used for academic advisement meetings between students and instructors. The program also offers one (and sometimes two) voluntary library evenings for students to get together for peer work (dependent upon availability of library staff support).

### Columbia University – Prison Education Program

**Key Contacts:**

**Geraldine Downey**, Director of the Center for Justice at Columbia and Professor of Psychology  
**Eileen Gillooly**, Executive Director of the Heyman Center for the Humanities and Society of Fellows

**Columbia University:** 116th St & Broadway, New York, NY 10027

**Website:**

<http://justiceineducation.columbia.edu/>

**Prison(s):**

Sing Sing Correctional Facility, Ossining, NY 10562-5442  
 (male maximum security, pop approximately 1602)

Taconic Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills, NY 10507-2497  
 (female medium security, pop approximately 293)

Columbia professors also deliver courses at Rikers Island; Queensboro Correctional Facility; and the Metropolitan Detention Center, Brooklyn (a federal facility). Columbia professors also teach for the Bedford Hills College Program on an ad hoc basis.

*Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.*

**Number of Students Enrolled (most recent four semesters):**

In the fall 2017, Columbia University enrolled 13 to 18 students in each of the four courses delivered in New York State prisons.

**Number of Courses offered:**

Approximately 10 courses per year (at least four at Taconic and four at Sign Sing during regular semesters and one summer course).

<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
For the most part, Columbia offers higher level elective courses, including neuroscience, biology, and economics. In the fall 2017 courses include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Interpretation of Cultures</li> <li>• Social Factors and Psychopathology</li> <li>• The American Economy</li> <li>• Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies</li> <li>• Psychology</li> <li>• Literature</li> </ul>
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
Credits only - no degree Credits offered at Sing Sing Correctional Facility are transferred and contribute to an AAS or BS at Mercy College. Credits offered at Taconic Correctional Facility are transferred and contribute to an AA or BA at Marymount Manhattan College.
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
N/A
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
Recruitment and enrollment for students at Sing Sing CF and Taconic CF is administered by Hudson Link. At the other facilities, students are selected via an interest application.
<b>Financing:</b>
academic advisement program for students who have been involved with the justice system. Through CI, students are connected with a college counselor once they return home in order to aid them with navigating the college application process. CI also connects students with a mentor and a network of other students who are formerly incarcerated.
<b>Additional Resources:</b>
Prison-to-College Pipeline has a dedicated classroom at Otisville CF in a building designated for educational programming. P2CP also partners with the Osborne Association to do discharge and reentry planning for students, providing support related to housing and parole board preparation prior to release.

## Cornell Prison Education Program

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<b>Robert Scott</b> , Executive Director ( <a href="mailto:robscott@cornell.edu">robscott@cornell.edu</a> )
<b>Cornell University:</b> 144 East Ave, Ithaca, NY 14853
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://cpep.cornell.edu/">http://cpep.cornell.edu/</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
Auburn Correctional Facility / Altona, New York 12910-3000 (male medium security 1,577 capacity )
Cayuga Correctional Facility / Moravia, New York 13118-1150 (male medium security 859 capacity)
Five Points Correctional Facility / Beacon, NY 12508-0307 (male medium security, 1297 capacity)
Elmira Correctional Facility / Elmira, NY 14901-0500 (male maximum security,1623 capacity)
<i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled:</b>
Spring 2017: 154 student per semester in each facility
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
27 credit-bearing courses
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
Comprehensive liberal arts curriculum
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
AA with a concentration in Social Sciences and the Humanities
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
As of Spring 2017, 46 degrees awarded through SUNY Cayuga Community College
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent and must be in good standing with discipline and completion of other required programming. They must also pass a rigorous entrance exam and academic evaluation.
<b>Financing:</b>
Privately funded
<b>Overview:</b>
Cornell University is located in Ithaca, New York. It is a privately endowed research university and also the federal land-grant institution for the State of New York; three of its seven colleges are public and part of SUNY. The Cornell Prison Education Program (CPEP) began delivering credit-bearing courses in prison in 1999 and formally established a degree granting program in 2010. Although instruction is provided by Cornell University faculty, graduate students, and some visiting professors from surrounding colleges, these course culminate into an associate degree granted by SUNY Cayuga Community College.

**Additional Resources:**

Some students who do not pass the entrance exam are invited to enroll in preparatory courses. Students can apply for admission once they have completed these courses. CPEP also organizes a guest lecture series, debate team, and a group called “Writers Bloc,” which produces a literary journal including poetry and short stories written by CPEP students. CPEP has an academic coordinator in each facility who operates the day-to-day administration of the program but also offers extra study hall hours and academic advisement to support student success.

## CUNY – Prison-to-College Pipeline

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Jessica Jensen</b>, Director of Statewide Educational Initiatives, Prisoner Reentry Institute (jejensen@jjay.cuny.edu)</p> <p><b>Ann Jacobs</b>, Director, Prisoner Reentry Institute (ajacobs@jjay.cuny.edu )</p>
<b>Prisoner Reentry Institute:</b> John Jay College, 524 West 59th Street, 609B-BMW, New York, NY 10019
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://johnjaypri.org/">http://johnjaypri.org/</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Otisville Correctional Facility / Otisville, New York 10963-0008 (male medium security, pop approximately 585)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled Fall 2017:</b>
52 students enrolled
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
Four courses
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
<p>General education course (English, Sociology 101, American History) and alternate elective course offerings (music, communications, social work and gender studies, anthropology, and black studies). St. John's University also provides for-credit courses at Queensboro.</p>
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
Credit-bearing courses/no degree
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
N/A- Not a degree granting program. This is a reentry-based program.
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
<p>Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent. They must be five years from release and returning to the New York City area. Students who meet these criteria then take a CUNY reading assessment test followed up by a one-on-one interview and a review of potential students' transfer eligibility.</p>
<b>Financing:</b>
Funding includes private donations and Second Chance Pell (federal DOE/DOJ experimental funding)
<b>Overview:</b>
<p>The Prison-to-College Pipeline was founded in 2011 through John Jay College of Criminal Justice. John Jay College is a senior college and one of 20 colleges in the City University of New York system.</p> <p>The Prison-to-College Pipeline (P2CP) does not offer students degrees, but prepares them for continuing their education upon release. Students are provided with credit-bearing courses in general required coursework so that, upon release, students have completed most core prerequisites for an AA degree. In line with the reentry-based focus on transition to college coursework at home, P2CP offers courses on planning, time and stress management, orientation to campus offices, and applying for financial aid.</p> <p>The P2PC reentry-based model is focused transitioning students from coursework in the prison to college on campus. This approach is made possible with the connection of P2CP to College Initiative (CI). CI is also a direct service program of the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College. It is an</p>

academic advisement program for students who have been involved with the justice system. Through CI, students are connected with a college counselor once they return home in order to aid them with navigating the college application process. CI also connects students with a mentor and a network of other students who are formerly incarcerated.

**Additional Resources:**

Prison-to-College Pipeline has a dedicated classroom at Otisville CF in a building designated for educational programming. P2CP also partners with the Osborne Association to do discharge and reentry planning for students, providing support related to housing and parole board preparation prior to release.

## Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Sean Pica</b>, Executive Director (<a href="mailto:spica@hudsonlink.org">spica@hudsonlink.org</a>)  <b>Samuel Arroyo</b>, Program Director (<a href="mailto:sarroyo@hudsonlink.org">sarroyo@hudsonlink.org</a>)</p>
Hudson Link, PO Box 862, Ossining, New York 10562, (914) 941-0794
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://www.hudsonlink.org/">http://www.hudsonlink.org/</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Greene Correctional Facility / Coxsackie, NY, 12051-0008 (male medium security, pop approximately 1,497)</p> <p>Fishkill Correctional Facility, Beacon, NY, 12508-0307 (male medium security, pop approximately 1,429)</p> <p>Shawangunk Correctional Facility, Wallkill, NY 12589-0750 (male maximum security, pop approximately 501)</p> <p>Sing Sing Correctional Facility, Ossining, NY 10562-5442 (male maximum security, pop approximately 1,602)</p> <p>Sullivan Correctional Facility, Fallsburg, NY 12733-0116 (male maximum security, pop approximately 480)</p> <p>Taconic Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills, NY 10507-2497 (female medium security, pop approximately 293)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled (Spring 2017):</b>
<p>461 current students:  108 in pre-college courses; 353 in credit-bearing courses (207 in AA programs, 146 in BS programs)</p>
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
126 courses in total
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
Courses differ by college/university
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Columbia University (Sing Sing CF &amp; Taconic CF): only offering credits, no degree</li> <li>• Mercy College (only at Sing Sing CF): AS &amp; BS degree</li> <li>• Nyack College (Taconic CF): AA degree / (Fishkill CF) AA &amp; BS degree</li> <li>• St. Thomas Aquinas: BS (following AA of Sullivan Community College @ Sullivan CF)</li> <li>• Siena College (only in Greene CF): only offering credits, no degree</li> <li>• SUNY Columbia Greene Community College (only at Greene CF): AA in liberal arts</li> <li>• SUNY Sullivan (only in Sullivan CF): AA degree</li> <li>• SUNY Ulster (only at Shawangunk): AA degree</li> <li>• Vassar College (only at Taconic CF): only offering credits, no degree</li> </ul>
<b>Number of Degrees Granted: (from 1998 to spring 2017)</b>
475 degrees granted – 193 associate degrees and 264 bachelor’s degrees



**Admissions Requirement:**

Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent and must be clear of disciplinary infractions (which vary depending on correctional facility security classification), must complete all correctional required programs; and agree to have a facility hold for 1 semester. All applicants must agree to a facility hold because they must wait at least one semester before being accepted into the program. Once students are accepted into the program they are required to take any necessary placement exams for the college that will be administering the courses and granting credits.

**Financing:**

Hudson Link is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. They are sustained by private donations and grants. It is important to note that Hudson Link has raised private funds to support tuition cost at all partnering degree-granting colleges. These include both public and private higher education institutions. All of their public college partners are SUNY community colleges. Tuition at these institutions is also supported by local county governments who typically contribute 1/3 of tuition for each full time equivalent credit hour for all community college students.

**Overview:**

Hudson Link, established in 1998, is located in Ossining, NY. Its mission is to provide college education, life skills, and reentry support to people who are incarcerated. Hudson Link operates a consortium model, acting as the administrator of a variety of college programs in 6 different correctional facilities. They accomplish this by partnering with 8 higher education institutions. Courses delivered by instructors from any of these colleges may lead to a degree granted by one of 5 degree-granting programs. In the consortium model, Hudson Link employs an academic coordinator for each of their prison locations who acts as the liaison between the college programs and DOCCS. This coordinator also plays a key role in student advisement, retention and reentry planning. It takes students on average three years or less to complete their associate degree and four years or less to complete their bachelor's degree.

**Additional Resources:**

Hudson Link delivers a pre-college program for students who are eligible for the college program but may not be prepared for college-level coursework. The pre-college program is typically a year-long and involves 6 remedial courses. Additionally, Hudson Link also has programs to support the well-being of students upon their release and to support academic persistence toward degree completion. To date, 600 Hudson Link students have returned home. Hudson Link students have access to alumni services that provide resources including clothing, Metro Cards, laptop computers, as well as bi-monthly alumni gatherings (where students have the opportunity to network and connect with mentoring support). The Hudson Link reentry program is run and primarily staffed by formerly incarcerated students, most of whom are Hudson Link alumni.

## Medaille College

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Timothy McCorry</b>, Chair of Social Sciences Department (<a href="mailto:tam332@Medaille.edu">tam332@Medaille.edu</a>)  <b>F. Paul Muccigrosso</b>, MSW, Program Director</p>
<p><b>Medaille College</b>, 18 Agassiz Circle, Buffalo, NY 14214</p>
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://www.medaille.edu/">http://www.medaille.edu/</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Albion Correctional Facility / Albion, NY 14411-9399          (female medium security, pop approximately 1,057 capacity)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled (most recent four semesters):</b>
20 to 32 students on average
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
24-30 different courses (average of six courses per semester)
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
Business, human resources, a range of general education courses
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
AS in Liberal Studies
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
Since 2012, 10 students have earned an AS
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
<p>Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent and must be free from all Tier II misbehavior tickets for six months, free from Tier III misbehavior tickets for one year, and must be fluent in English. The application process for the Medaille-Albion program heavily weighs on an essay to assess writing skills, goals, and motivations. Those who are accepted into the program must complete three workshops before starting credit-bearing courses. These courses prepare students for college-level work.</p>
<b>Financing:</b>
Privately funded
<b>Overview:</b>
<p>Medaille College is a private, liberal arts college located in Buffalo, NY. Medaille has been offering accredited and transferable courses to students at Albion Correctional Facility since the summer of 2008. Students at Albion have the opportunity to earn an associate degree in science of liberal studies. It takes students about two and a half years to complete the program.</p>
<b>Additional Resources:</b>
<p>Medaille College gives students the responsibility of mapping and planning their college coursework with the help of an academic advisor. Students are required to attend a study hall once per week for approximately three hours. Additional optional study hall time may be available depending on the student schedules.</p>

## Mercy College

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Lucretia Mann</b>, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs (<a href="mailto:lmann@mercy.edu">lmann@mercy.edu</a>)  <b>Dr. Karol Dean</b>, Dean &amp; Professor of Psychology (<a href="mailto:kdean@mercy.edu">kdean@mercy.edu</a>)  <b>Margaret McGrail</b>, VP, Enrollment Services (<a href="mailto:mmcgrail@mercy.edu">mmcgrail@mercy.edu</a>)</p>
<p><b>Mercy College</b>, 555 Broadway Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522</p>
<b>Website:</b>
<p><a href="https://www.mercy.edu/">https://www.mercy.edu/</a></p>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Sing Sing Correctional Facility, Ossining, NY 10562-5442          (male maximum security, pop approximately 1,602)</p>
<p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled 2016-2017:</b>
<p>Fall 2016: 118 students; Spring 2017: 112 students; Summer 2017: 97 students</p>
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
<p>Fall 2016: 16 courses; Spring 2017: 18 courses; Summer 2017: 9 courses</p>
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
<p>Comprehensive liberal arts and social science curriculum</p>
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
<p>AS in Liberal Arts and Sciences          BS in Behavioral Science</p>
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
<p>Over 600 degrees conferred since inception of the program. The last five years of conferrals is as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2016-17: BS: 21, AS: 14, Total: 35          2015-16: BS: 6, AS: 21, Total: 27          2014-15: BS: 8, AS: 12, Total: 20          2013-14: BS: 10, AS: 16, Total: 26</p>
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
<p>Mercy enrolls students at Sing Sing Correctional Facility from the Hudson Link pre-college program. Students are required to have a High School Diploma or equivalent. All student recruitment and enrollment is coordinated through Hudson Link, the college's partner.</p>
<b>Financing:</b>
<p>Second Chance Pell (federal DOE) and the District Attorney of New York Criminal Justice Investment Initiative</p>

**Overview:**

Mercy College is a private four-year nonsectarian liberal arts college whose main campus is located in Dobbs Ferry, NY. Since its inception, Mercy College has been committed to their original mission focused on the transformative experience of higher education.

Mercy College provided educational services in New York prisons from the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s, at which time the Federal and New York State funding was no longer available. After a brief period of interruption in providing educational services at the New York State correctional facilities, Mercy formed a partnership with Hudson Link, which provided some funding as well as coordination with DOCCS and allowed Mercy College to continue its work with the prison population Sing Sing. Columbia University also offers some courses at Sing Sing that Mercy College accepts toward the students' electives.

**Additional Resources:**

Students are able to enroll in the pre-college courses offered by Hudson Link while they are on the waitlist to enroll in one of Mercy College's offered degree programs. These courses enable students to improve their English and Math skills before taking college-level courses. Through the partnership, Hudson Link helps provide Mercy College students with reentry services.

## New York Theological Seminary (NYTS)

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Rev. Canon Petero Sabune</b>, Program Administrator (<a href="mailto:psabune@nyts.edu">psabune@nyts.edu</a>)  <i>Note: Rev. Sabune is also employed by DOCCS on a part-time basis as the Reentry Chaplin for DOCCS.</i></p>
<p><b>New York Theological Seminary</b>, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115</p>
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://www.nyts.edu/prospective-students/academic-programs/master-of-professional-studies/">http://www.nyts.edu/prospective-students/academic-programs/master-of-professional-studies/</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Sing Sing Correctional Facility, Ossining, NY 10562-5442          (male maximum security, pop approximately 1,602)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled (most recent four semesters):</b>
The program accepts 15 to 20 students a year.
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
Approximately 6 courses offered per semester.
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
Introduction to 1st Testament, Ministry, Leadership, Systematic Theory, Church History, Pastoral Counseling, Ethics and Communication.
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
MA Professional Studies
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
Over 35 years of operation NYTS has granted more than 500 degrees at Sing Sing as of June 2017.
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
<p>Applicants must have a bachelor's degree or the equivalent 120 ungraduated credits from a four-year accredited institution. Applicants also need to complete an application which is available in the chaplain office of each New York prison facility. Applicants need two strong recommendations, including one from a prison chaplain. Applications are accepted from prisons across the state. Once accepted into the program, students are transferred to Sing Sing. Applicants must also agree to a one-year facility hold and rigorous participation in the program, which restricts students from receiving any visitors during the week.</p>
<b>Financing:</b>
Private donations
<b>Overview:</b>
<p>The New York Theological Seminary (NYTS) is a non-denominational institution established in the 1900s. Since 1982 NYTS has provided men incarcerated at Sing Sing Correctional Facility the opportunity to obtain a seminary degree (Master of Professional Studies). NYTS is the only master's degree program available in all of New York State correctional facilities.</p> <p>This is a one-year intensive program (requiring a full day and evening of classes, 5 days a week). Students in the program are housed together in the facility so they are able to study and attend classes together in a seminar style learning environment in the Sing Sing chapel. NYTS also requires students to contribute to the community at least once during their semester. As an example, this might involve volunteering with an at-risk youth outreach program that takes place at night in the facility.</p>
<b>Additional Resources:</b>
<p>NYTS also has student services available three to four days a week for help with studies and personal support. NYTS provides referrals and counseling services for those who request it.</p>

## New York University Prison Education Program (NYU PEP)

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<b>Nikhil Pal Singh</b> , Faculty Director ( <a href="mailto:nikhil.singh@nyu.edu">nikhil.singh@nyu.edu</a> ) <b>Rachael Hudak</b> , Administrative Director ( <a href="mailto:rachael.hudak@nyu.edu">rachael.hudak@nyu.edu</a> )
<b>New York University</b> , 20 Cooper Square, 4th Floor New York, NY 10003
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://prisoneducation.nyu.edu/">http://prisoneducation.nyu.edu/</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
Wallkill Correctional Facility / Wallkill, NY 12589-0286 (Male Medium security, pop approximately 526 )
<i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled:</b>
NYU PEP uses a rolling admissions process. Current overall enrollment includes 82 students (35 were admitted in each of the fall 2016 and spring 2017 semesters, 15-17 in summer 2017). The program expects to reach capacity with 50-60 new enrollments in the fall of 2017.
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
Four to five per semester
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
NYU PEP offers a diverse range of courses in four core foundations of the NYU Liberal Studies program: Cultural Foundations (including Literary Analysis and Political Theory), Social Foundations (including Sociology and American Studies), Writing (three Level I courses and two Level II courses), and Electives (including Environmental Science and Speech).
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
AA in liberal studies
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
Seven as of Spring 2017
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent and must be in good standing with discipline and completion of other required programming at Wallkill Correctional Facility. Individuals who are interested must complete an application process. Admissions decisions are made based on board review of applications and interview.
<b>Financing:</b>
Privately funded
<b>Overview:</b>
New York University (NYU) is a private non-profit research university located in New York City. The NYU Prison Education Program (NYU PEP) began in the spring of 2015. NYU PEP offers credit-bearing courses and transferable college credits, leading to an associate degree.
Students admitted into the program must attend an orientation in order to understand the program's expectations and to access available tutoring before starting classes. Students take three courses per semester. Generally, students complete their degree in 2 to 2 ½ years.
<b>Additional Resources:</b>
NYU PEP provides students with peer mentors, writing support workshops, and office hours. They also offer a non-degree program to over 300 men in the Wallkill Correctional Facility with workshops in writing, computer tutorials, meditation, book club, performing arts, other informational workshops,

and guest speakers.

After students are released, NYU PEP continues to support students following a “needs assessment” (provided by a staff social worker to every soon-to-be-released student). The post-release counseling program includes support for continuing education, housing and employment. These services also include campus-based, weekly workshops, monthly fellowship events, and networking events with their peers and others from the University. NYU PEP students and alumni who return for support also have access to computers and phones in the PEP campus office.

## Nyack College

<b>Key Contacts:</b>	
<p><b>Cynthia Dorsey</b>, Coordinator of Distance Education Program (<a href="mailto:cynthia.dorsey@nyack.edu">cynthia.dorsey@nyack.edu</a>)  <b>Dr. David Turk</b>, Provost &amp; Vice President for Academic Affairs (<a href="mailto:david.turk@nyack.edu">david.turk@nyack.edu</a>)  <b>Samuel Arroyo</b>, Hudson Link Program Director (<a href="mailto:sarroyo@hudsonlink.org">sarroyo@hudsonlink.org</a>)</p>	
<p><b>Nyack College</b>, 2 Washington Street New York, NY 10004</p>	
<b>Website:</b>	
<p><a href="http://www.nyack.edu">http://www.nyack.edu</a></p>	
<b>Prison(s):</b>	
<p>Fishkill Correctional Facility / Beacon, NY 12508-0307 (male medium security, pop approximately 1,429)</p> <p>Taconic Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills, NY 10507-2497 (female medium security, pop approximately 293)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>	
<b>Number of Students Enrolled 2016-2017:</b>	
<p>Approximately 65 students a semester (20 at Taconic and 45 at Fishkill)</p>	
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>	
<p>Three or four at each facility per semester for the AA programs and four courses per semester for the BS program</p>	
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>	
<p>Comprehensive liberal arts and bachelor of science curriculum</p>	
<p><b>AA courses include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College Writing</li> <li>• World Civilization</li> <li>• Intro to Philosophy</li> <li>• Interpersonal Communication</li> <li>• Elementary Spanish</li> <li>• Social Science Electives</li> </ul>	<p><b>BS courses include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational Theory &amp; Design</li> <li>• Managerial Accounting</li> <li>• Global Leadership</li> <li>• Research Methods &amp; Statistics</li> <li>• Economics &amp; Marketing</li> </ul>
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>	
<p>AA in Liberal Arts (Taconic Correctional Facility &amp; Fishkill Correctional Facility)          BS in Organizational management (Fishkill Correctional Facility only)</p>	
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>	
<p>As of Spring 2017 – more than 100 degrees awarded</p>	
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>	
<p>All students' recruitment and enrollment is administered by Hudson Link.</p>	
<b>Financing:</b>	
<p>Second Chance Pell (federal DOE/DOJ experimental funding)</p>	
<b>Overview:</b>	
<p>Nyack College is private non-profit Christian college with several campus locations across the New York metropolitan area, as well as a theological seminary campus in Puerto Rico. Through a partnership with Hudson Link, Nyack College offers students the ability to earn their AA in liberal arts at Taconic Correctional Facility and an AA in liberal arts and BA in organizational management at Fishkill Correctional Facility.</p>	



Nyack College has been providing higher education programming in New York State prisons since the founding of the college in late 1800s. Nyack's prison-based degree programs began in the 1980s and 90s during a time when state and federal funding was available to support higher education for people who were incarcerated. Nyack College was the first college partnership with Hudson Link which began at Sing Sing correctional facility in 1998. Nyack College was delivering a college completion program at Sing Sing prior to the founding of Hudson Link.

The Nyack College curriculum is based on a cohort model which provides a supportive learning community for students. Emphasis is placed on expanding students' communication, critical thinking, interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Nyack College offers the liberal arts AA degree and the organizational management BA program in the prison programs as they are considered to have the greatest utility of this student population. 80% of Nyack students in their prison-based programs complete their degrees.

**Additional Resources:**

Nyack College has a program administrator for the in-prison program. This person also provides some academic advisement. Additionally, as a partner with Hudson Link, students in Nyack's in-prison program have access to reentry counselling and alumni services to support their on-going success in the community after release. Several students have persisted to continue their academic career at Nyack College after they were released.

## St. Lawrence University Inside-Out Exchange Program

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<b>Bob Cowser</b> ( <a href="mailto:rcowser@stlawu.edu">rcowser@stlawu.edu</a> ), 315-229-5961
<b>St. Lawrence University</b> , 23 Romoda Drive, Canton, NY 13617
<b>Website:</b>
N/A
<b>Prison(s):</b>
Riverview Correctional Facility / Ogdensburg, NY 13669-0158 (male medium security, pop approximately 866)
<i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled (Spring 2017):</b>
8 to 10 students from inside take courses with 10 to 11 traditional students from the St. Lawrence campus
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
Two courses per semester
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
English, writing, philosophy, history, sociology, chemistry
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
Credits – no degree
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
N/A
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
Interview (no formal application process, students referred by correctional staff)
<b>Financing:</b>
Privately funded
<b>Overview:</b>
<p>St. Lawrence University is a private liberal arts college in Canton, New York (located in the North Country region of the state). In 2010, faculty at St. Lawrence were formally trained in the Inside-Out model of college-in-prison programs. Inside-Out courses are delivered in prison and enroll both traditional students from the home campus as well as students who are incarcerated. St. Lawrence originally delivered for-credit courses in Upstate Correctional Facility. This program phased out due to onerous demands of travel between the campus and prison. In 2012, St. Lawrence was able to re-establish and expand the number faculty and courses offered at Riverview Correctional Facility. Since then, St. Lawrence has consistently offered two courses per semester. All courses are credit-bearing.</p>
<b>Additional Resources:</b>
<p>Some faculty run a “book club” in addition to their regular courses. This allows for additional time for faculty-student interaction and advisement.</p> <p>In the fall semester of 2017, the St. Lawrence Inside-Out program incorporated a core program called “First-Year Program.” This is a long-standing program at St. Lawrence that is required for all new students. The First-Year Program is a college prep and skills program that lasts a semester and a half. Objectives of the First-Year Program include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce students to a liberal arts education;</li> <li>• Explore interdisciplinary approaches to topics of interest;</li> <li>• Help students develop reading, writing, oral communication and research skills;</li> <li>• Develop an engaged learning community.</li> </ul>

## SUNY Genesee Community College

<b>Key Contacts:</b>	
<b>Michael Gosselin:</b> Assistant Professor of English ( <a href="mailto:rgosselin@genesee.edu">rgosselin@genesee.edu</a> ) <b>Karin Kovach-Allen:</b> Dean of Human Communications and Behavior ( <a href="mailto:KEKovachAllen@genesee.edu">KEKovachAllen@genesee.edu</a> )	
<b>SUNY Genesee Community College</b> , 1 College Rd, Batavia, NY 14020	
<b>Website:</b>	
<a href="http://www.genesee.edu/">www.genesee.edu/</a>	
<b>Prison(s):</b>	
Attica Correctional Facility / Attica, New York 14011-0149 male maximum security (pop approximately 2100 – 2200)	
<i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i>	
<b>Number of Students Enrolled 2016-2017:</b>	
22-26	
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>	
Four courses per semester	
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>	
Comprehensive liberal arts and science curriculum	
Fall 2017 courses include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition in the Natural and Social Sciences</li> <li>• Introduction to Philosophy</li> <li>• Algebra 1</li> <li>• Elementary Spanish 1</li> </ul>	Spring 2018 planned courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American History</li> <li>• World Literature or Science Fiction Literature</li> <li>• Human Relations 1</li> <li>• Principles of Business</li> </ul>
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>	
AAS (Liberal Arts & Science – General Studies Degree)	
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>	
Four students graduated in Spring 2017	
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>	
Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent and be in good standing at Attica Correctional Facility. Applicants are also required to pass a placement tests in order to determine admission. Applicants must be “college ready” as the program is not able to provide any remedial support.	
<b>Financing:</b>	
Private funding & county-level charge-back of students originating county of residence	
<b>Overview:</b>	
SUNY Genesee Community College (GCC) main campus is located in Batavia, NY. It is one of 30 community colleges in the state and has campus centers in four New York counties (Genesee, Livingston, Orleans, and Wyoming).	
GCC has a long history of providing credited college courses during an era of federal and state funding. That funding (federal Pell and state TAP) was cut in the late 1990s. The most recent iteration of college programming restarted in 2011 is almost fully supported by private funding.	
Classes are offered four nights per week in the facility. Students can take up to three classes per semester.	
<b>Additional Resources:</b>	
N/A	

## SUNY Jefferson Community College (JCC)

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Terrence Harris</b>, Dean of Continuing Education (<a href="mailto:tharris@sunyjefferson.edu">tharris@sunyjefferson.edu</a>)  <b>John Trumbell</b>, Continuing Education Coordinator, Division of Continuing Education (<a href="mailto:jtrumbell@sunyjefferson.edu">jtrumbell@sunyjefferson.edu</a>)</p>
<p><b>SUNY Jefferson Community College</b>, 1220 Coffeen Street, Watertown, NY 13601</p>
<b>Website:</b>
<p><a href="http://www.sunyjefferson.edu/">http://www.sunyjefferson.edu/</a></p>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Cape Vincent Correctional Facility / Cape Vincent, New York 13618-0599  (Male medium security, pop approximately 856)</p> <p>Planned expansions in 2019 to the following:  Watertown Correctional Facility / Watertown, NY 13601-9340  (Male medium security, pop approximately 520)</p> <p>Gouverneur Correctional Facility / Gouverneur, NY 13642-0370  (Male medium security, pop approximately 861)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled (most recent four semesters):</b>
<p>20 students per semester in new program, in previous recent semesters JCC enrolled approximately 50 students</p>
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
<p>Five to six courses per year</p>
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
<p>Comprehensive liberal arts and general education courses</p>
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
<p>Individual Studies AA degree with a human services concentration</p>
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
<p>New program – N/A (and previous program was not a degree program)</p>
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
<p>Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent and must be in good standing with discipline and completion of other required correctional programming. Applicants must also pass a placement exam prior to admission.</p>
<b>Financing:</b>
<p>District Attorney of New York Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (DANY)</p>
<b>Overview:</b>
<p>SUNY Jefferson Community College is one of the 30 community colleges of the State University of New York system. JCC is located in Watertown, New York, which sits in the North County region of the State, approximately an hour’s drive north of Syracuse, NY.</p> <p>JCC has a history of providing higher education programming to students who are incarcerated in the prisons within the proximity of the college. Most recently (between 2013 and 2016) JCC provided a 24-credit college access program which included SUNY core general education curriculum in English (reading and writing), math, and social sciences. Funding for this program ended in late 2016 and a</p>

final cohort from this program, called “the Hope Program” completed courses in early 2017. Students who completed 24 credits in two years were able to apply this accomplishment toward a request for early release (resulting in a six-month reduction in time served).

In 2017, JCC became a recipient of a five-year grant as part of the District Attorney of New York Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (DANY-CJII). The goal of this initiative is to expand access to higher education for people who are incarcerated, to develop best practice for improving college in prison and to develop supports to improve persistence upon reentry. Through this funding, JCC will deliver an AA degree program in Individual Studies which will provide students with all SUNY two-year degree general education requirements and also provide a concentration in Human Services (a known popular career choice for a large number of people who have justice involvement).

**Additional Resources:**

N/A

## Mohawk Valley Community College (MVCC) – College-in-Prison Program

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Morris Pearson</b>, Director of Civic Responsibilities &amp; Chief Conduct Officer (<a href="mailto:mpearson@mvcc.edu">mpearson@mvcc.edu</a>)  <b>Patricia Washington</b>, Prison &amp; Jail Education Coordinator (<a href="mailto:pwashington@mvcc.edu">pwashington@mvcc.edu</a>)  <b>Brittany Dielemans</b>, Coordinator of Civic Responsibilities (<a href="mailto:bdielemans@mvcc.edu">bdielemans@mvcc.edu</a>)</p>
<b>Mohawk Valley Community College</b> , 1101 Sherman Drive, Utica, NY 13501
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://www.mvcc.edu">www.mvcc.edu</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Marcy Correctional Facility / Marcy, New York 13403  (Male medium security, capacity approximately 904)</p> <p>Previously at Mohawk Correctional Facility (2014-2017), Rome, NY, 13440  (Male medium security, capacity approximately 1,284)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled (most recent four semesters):</b>
23 new students at Marcy Correctional Facility will be enrolled in the fall 2017 semester.
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
Three to four courses per year
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
Comprehensive liberal arts and general education courses as well as business management related courses.
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
AA in General Studies and Business Management
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
New program – N/A
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
All students are required to have either a High School Diploma or equivalent certificate in order to apply to the college-in-prison program. DOCCS requires all potential students to have six months of good behavior prior to applying to the program, which includes being free of Tier II tickets (higher level offenses) within the previous six months. All applicants must also take the MVCC placement/entrance exam, which is the same entrance exam offered to all potential MVCC students on the main campus. This exam determines if they are able to enter general math and English classes or if they need remedial courses before entering the College-in-Prison Program. Students are also required to complete a questionnaire and participate in an interview for the program.
<b>Financing:</b>
District Attorney of New York Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (DANY) and Mohawk Valley Community College In-Kind (includes county-level FTE support)
<b>Overview:</b>
MVCC has been involved in providing higher education in the prison environment since 2014, originally at Mohawk Correctional Facility and now currently at Marcy Correctional Facility. The College-in-Prison Program provides individuals who are incarcerated an opportunity to complete a college degree from Mohawk Valley Community College, while serving their sentence. The College-in-Prison Program recognizes the educational gaps that exist within the criminal justice system and works to strengthen those particular barriers by challenging and inspiring incarcerated students via a

college education. MVCC academic standards and coursework are stringent and foster developmental growth. MVCC's College-in-Prison Program students are supported with an unbiased approach to education and growth through personal development. Through the means of education College-in-Prison Program members will help rebuild students' lives by offering hope and opportunity to foster student's imagination, passion, intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. MVCC College-in-Prison Program is dedicated to treating students with dignity and providing with a healthy learning environment that foster their ability to excel through academia.

In 2017, MVCC became a recipient of a five-year grant as part of the District Attorney of New York Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (DANY-CJII). The goal of this initiative is to expand access to higher education for people who are incarcerated, to develop best practice for improving college in prison and to develop supports to improve persistence upon reentry.

**Additional Resources:**

Through MVCC's on campus New Directions Program, MVCC has a history of rendering reentry services to previously incarcerated students within the community since 2006. The program assists, on average, 70 to 120 students per semester in the enrollment of classes as well as assisting with access of services both on campus and in the community. The MVCC New Directions Program also works closely with the Oneida County Reentry Task Force to connect individuals within the prison program to services in the community upon release.

## North County Community College (NCCC) Second Chance Program

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Sarah Kilby</b>, Director of Second Chance Program (<a href="mailto:skilby@nccc.edu">skilby@nccc.edu</a> )  <b>Joe Keegan</b>, VP of Academic Affairs (<a href="mailto:jkeegan@nccc.edu">jkeegan@nccc.edu</a> )</p>
<p><b>North County Community College</b>, 23 Santanoni Ave., Saranac Lake, NY 12983</p>
<b>Website:</b>
<p><a href="http://www.nccc.edu/">http://www.nccc.edu/</a></p>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Adirondack Correctional Facility / Ray Brook, New York 12977-0110  (male medium security, pop approximately 386)</p> <p>Bare Hill Correctional Facility / Malone, New York 12953-0020  (male medium security, pop approximately 1496)</p> <p>Franklin Correctional Facility / Malone, New York 12953-0010  (male medium security, pop approximately 1420 )</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled:</b>
<p>Spring 2017 Cohort: 109 students  Summer 2017 Cohort: 143 Students  Fall 2017 Cohort: 145 Students</p>
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
<p>Spring 2017: 25 courses (Adirondack – 7, Bare Hill – 6, Franklin – 3, and FCI – 9)  Summer 2017: 36 courses (Adirondack – 7, Bare Hill – 9, Franklin – 9, and FCI – 11)  Fall 2017: 39 courses (Adirondack – 9, Bare Hill – 9, Franklin – 9, and FCI – 12)</p>
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
<p>NCCC offers a comprehensive liberal arts and social science curriculum, as well as an array of business class for those in Entrepreneurship Management track.</p>
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
<p>AAS in Entrepreneurship Management  AAS in Individual Studies (with Human Services concentration)  AA in Liberal Arts-Humanities and Social Science</p>
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
<p>N/A – This is a new program initiated through the Second Chance Pell funding.  AA degree completion is expected to take 2.5 years based on consecutive semester enrollment.</p>
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
<p>Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent and must have a clean discipline record. Students also need to be within five years of release. Students who previously attended college are eligible as long as they do not have loans in default. Those who meet requirements then take math and English placement exams.</p>
<b>Financing:</b>
<p>Second Chance Pell (a federal DOE/DOJ experimental funding) and SUNY community college county-level support per full time equivalence.</p>
<b>Overview:</b>
<p>North County Community College is one of the 30 community colleges of the State University of New</p>



York system. Although the main campus is located in Saranac Lake, the college has satellite campuses in Malone, NY, and Ticonderoga, NY, which are there small cities within the confines of the two counties served by the college (Franklin and Essex counties). The NCCC zone of residency covers more than 3,500 square miles in the northernmost area of New York.

**Additional Resources:**

The NCCC Second Chance Program has two academic coordinators who operate the day-to-day administration of the program in each facility but also offer extra study hall hours and academic advisement to support student success.

## SUNY Ulster Community College

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p>This program is an affiliate of Hudson Link.  <b>Samuel Arroyo</b>, Hudson Link Program Director (<a href="mailto:sarroyo@hudsonlink.org">sarroyo@hudsonlink.org</a>).  <b>Dr. Ivan Godfrey</b>, Academic, Assist. Professor and Hudson Link Academic Coordinator at Shawangunk Correctional Facility (<a href="mailto:godfreyi@sunyulster.edu">godfreyi@sunyulster.edu</a>)</p>
<b>SUNY Ulster Community College</b> , 491 Cottekill Rd, Stone Ridge, NY 12484
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://www.hudsonlink.org/partners/colleges/">http://www.hudsonlink.org/partners/colleges/</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Shawangunk Correctional Facility / Wallkill, New York 12589-0750          (male maximum security, pop approximately 501)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled (most recent four semesters):</b>
First cohort in Fall 2016 had 19 students, additional 20 students in Fall 2017
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
Two courses during the Fall 2017 and five courses during Spring 2018
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
Comprehensive general education curriculum
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
AA in Individual Studies
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
N/A – this is a new program
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
Applicants must have a High School Diploma or equivalent. They must have a good disciplinary record in the facility.
<b>Financing:</b>
Private donations, county support per FTE
<b>Overview:</b>
<p>SUNY Ulster is one of 30 community colleges of the State University of New York system. SUNY Ulster began the College in Prison Program in Fall 2016. SUNY Ulster developed this program as it is part of their mission of “improving lives by fostering intellectual growth, cultural enrichment, economic prosperity ... and being responsive to broader regional needs.” SUNY Ulster has established this as a three-year associate level degree program.</p>
<b>Additional Resources:</b>
<p>SUNY Ulster administers an English and math assessment to determine the need for remedial math and English. Based on this assessment, students may be required to complete remedial courses in order to prepare for credit-bearing courses. SUNY Ulster delivers these courses in the facility.</p> <p>Hudson Links provides SUNY Ulster students with academic support and advisement. They also provide reentry services to students upon release.</p>

## Vassar College: Inside-Out Program

<b>Key Contacts:</b>
<p><b>Erin McCloskey</b>, Associate Professor of Education, Vassar College  <b>Samuel Arroyo</b>, Hudson Link Program Director (<a href="mailto:sarroyo@hudsonlink.org">sarroyo@hudsonlink.org</a>)  <i>Note: Vassar College is an affiliate of Hudson Link.</i></p>
<b>Vassar College</b> , 124 Raymond Ave, Poughkeepsie, NY 12604
<b>Website:</b>
<a href="http://www.vassar.edu/">www.vassar.edu/</a>
<b>Prison(s):</b>
<p>Taconic Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills, NY 10507-2497          (female medium security, pop approximately 293)</p> <p><i>Prison population based on DOCCS June 2016 data.</i></p>
<b>Number of Students Enrolled (most recent four semesters):</b>
10-13 students from Taconic with 10-11 traditional students from the Vassar campus per course
<b>Number of Courses offered:</b>
One course offered in the fall semester
<b>Types of Courses offered:</b>
100- & 200-level Sociology, Political Science, English, Education, Family Law and Social Policy
<b>Types of Degrees Offered or Credits Offered:</b>
Credit-bearing courses/no degree (credits transfer to Nyack College, which offers an AA degree at Taconic)
<b>Number of Degrees Granted:</b>
N/A
<b>Admissions Requirement:</b>
All students' recruitment and enrollment is administered by Hudson Link.
<b>Financing:</b>
Privately funded
<b>Overview:</b>
<p>Vassar College is a private liberal arts college located in Poughkeepsie, NY. Established in 2007, Vassar College was the first college in New York to deliver an Inside-Out model of a college-in-prison program. This model offers students the ability to earn college credits while incarcerated at Taconic Correctional facility and simultaneously offers the opportunity to traditional students from the Vassar campus to learn with the students from Taconic.</p>
<b>Additional Resources:</b>
Vassar College is an affiliate of Hudson Link.

# Appendix II: Student Survey (Blank)

## Mapping Higher Education in Prison in New York – Student Survey

**Instructions:** The purpose of this survey is to learn about your experience with college courses while incarcerated. All current students who are taking college courses in prison throughout New York are invited to complete this survey. Your responses will help us to better understand students' experiences of higher education in New York prisons. Your information will help inform recommendations for improving and expanding college programs in prisons. As a reminder...

- This survey is confidential. Please do not put your name on this paper.
- This survey includes a combination of multiple choice, short answer and short written response questions. Please skip any questions you are not comfortable answering.
- This is voluntary. You do not have to complete the survey. If you do not wish to complete the survey, simply return the forms in the provided envelope, seal it and give it to [college provider].
- If you decide to complete the survey, please sign the INFORMED CONSENT form and enclose it with your completed survey in the provided envelope and seal it. You can then return the *sealed envelope* to [college provider]. NOTE: DOCCS Research Unit will receive a copy of your informed consent form but will not receive any of the information you provide on the survey.
- DEADLINE: Please return your sealed survey envelope to [college provider] by May 1, 2017.

THANK YOU for your help with this survey. We really appreciate and value your perspective on higher education in prison!

### Please tell us a little about your background:

1. Which of the following best describes your race? (check ALL that apply)

- African American       Asian/Pacific Islander  
 Hispanic                 Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
 White

2. What is your age group?

- 21 and under             35-39  
 22-24                       40-49  
 25-29                       50 and over  
 30-34

3. How long have you been incarcerated on this bid? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you have a job at the time you were arrested?

- Yes  
 No

If yes, what kind of work did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Was this work  full-time – or --  part-time?

5. Do you have any children under the age of 18?

- Yes  
 No

6. What is your country of origin? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are you a U.S. citizen?

- Yes  
 No

8. Were you a good student in school before being incarcerated?

- Yes  
 No  
 Not Applicable

9. Are you the first in your family to take college courses?

- Yes  
 No

If no – have either of your parents completed any college courses?

Mother:  Yes  No

Father:  Yes  No

*If Applicable* -- Other Parental Figure or Guardian:  Yes  No

If you have children – have your children attended college?  Yes  No

10. What level of education have you completed? (Please check all that apply)

- GED  
 High School Diploma  
 AA/AS  
 BA/BS  
 MA  
 PhD

11. Did you take any college-level courses before you were incarcerated?

- Yes  
 No

If yes, describe how many courses or what degrees you have completed and at what colleges?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Have you taken courses in any other college program while incarcerated?

- Yes  
 No

If yes, what prison and/or program?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Now we will ask you some questions about your current college experience in this facility.**

13. Are you currently taking college courses?

- Yes
- No

14. Please list any college-level courses are you currently taking?

Course Title	Course Number or Level (like 200-level)

15. How many courses have you completed while incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_

16. Are you currently provided access to college advisers? *These are college representatives (which may include a faculty member) who talk with you about your academic career while incarcerated and upon release.*

- Yes
- No

17. Rate your level of satisfaction with your access to the following academic resources?

Type of Resource	Please check the best answer					
Text Books	<input type="radio"/> Very Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Not Available	<input type="radio"/> Not Applicable
Supplies (paper, pens, notebooks, etc.)	<input type="radio"/> Very Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Not Available	<input type="radio"/> Not Applicable
Library	<input type="radio"/> Very Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Not Available	<input type="radio"/> Not Applicable
Tutoring	<input type="radio"/> Very Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Not Available	<input type="radio"/> Not Applicable
Computer Access	<input type="radio"/> Very Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Not Available	<input type="radio"/> Not Applicable

How would you grade yourself on these behaviors in your current coursework?				
		Please circle one		
18.	Study habits	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
19.	Active and positive interaction with instructors	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
20.	Timely completion of course assignments	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
21.	Personal motivation to complete your current course(s)	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better

As a result of taking college courses while incarcerated...				
		Please circle one		
22.	I have become more critical, reflective and sophisticated in my thinking.	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
23.	I have grown in my abilities of scientific reasoning and problem-solving.	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
24.	I have gained new knowledge.	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
25.	I have become a lifelong learner - <i>meaning that I have developed skills that will allow me to continually improve my knowledge, skills and competence.</i>	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
26.	I have become more involved in making a difference in the civic well-being of this community. <i>This means engaging in activities or interactions in a way that promotes an enriched quality of life for me and is beneficial for those around me.</i>	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
27.	I have become more aware and tolerant of other people's political, religious and social views as a result of my college experience.	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better

Please rate the level of influence you think taking college courses while incarcerated has had on the following characteristics.				
28.	Self-awareness	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
29.	Confidence	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
30.	Social Competence – <i>This is about the quality of your interactions with others.</i>	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better
31.	Sense of purpose	<input type="radio"/> Strong	<input type="radio"/> Satisfactory	<input type="radio"/> I could do better

**We want to better understand the time available to you for your college studies in prison.** Please answer the questions below to give us an idea of how your time is structured and when you have access to resources outside of class for studying or doing course work.

32. When do you go to school?

- AM  
 PM

33. Is school a paid module?

- Yes  
 No

34. When do you study or do course work?

---

35. Do you have access to resources (time, space, learning materials) in the school area outside of school time?

- Yes  
 No

## Written Response Questions

Instructions: Please provide a written response to the following questions. Please keep in mind that the goal of this survey is to gain insight from current students about higher education in New York prisons and how well these programs are meeting your academic needs. Please be as candid as possible in your answers. As a reminder, we will not share your responses with anyone inside the prison.

*We have provided 2 lined sheets of paper for each question. You can say as much or as little in response to these questions as you like. You are invited to add more if you want.*

**Topic #1: Pathways/Aspirations:** Please briefly describe your pathway to becoming a college student in this program. How did you learn about and what steps did you take to become a student in this facility? What inspired or motivated you to do this? Briefly describe your in-prison college experience so far. What are your goals as a student? Describe what has been the most important influences on your personal development as a student while incarcerated.

**Topic #2: Benefits & Challenges:** Since taking classes while incarcerated, what have been the benefits so far? What have been the challenges?

**Topic #3: Defining Success/Outcomes:** “Student success” means far more than good grades and completing a degree. In your own words, what does it mean to you to be a successful college student?

**Topic #4: Your ideas about your current college program:** If you were able to make changes to the college program available to you, what kind of changes would you make?



## Appendix III: Characteristics of Student Survey Respondents

Tables 1 and 2 display salient characteristics of the incarcerated students who responded to the student survey. Over half of the respondents – 56 percent – were serving time in medium security prisons. Students have been incarcerated, on average, for 122 months, or just over 10 years.

There were differences among male and female respondents: male students had been incarcerated nearly twice as long as female students (131 months vs. 67 months, respectively). There is also regional variation in the average length of time served, where the highest average length of time served is 158 months (Hudson Valley) and the lowest average length of time served is 46 months (North County region). This is likely a result of significant concentration of medium security facilities in the North County region of the state, whereas the Hudson Valley region has more maximum security prisons.

While it was important to ensure that we received responses from a geographically representative sample of incarcerated students, we also wanted to understand the communities where these students will most likely return. Using Region of Commitment as a proxy, we asked students to provide this information in the survey.

**TABLE 1: Survey Respondents: Area of Incarceration, Security Level, Length of Incarceration**

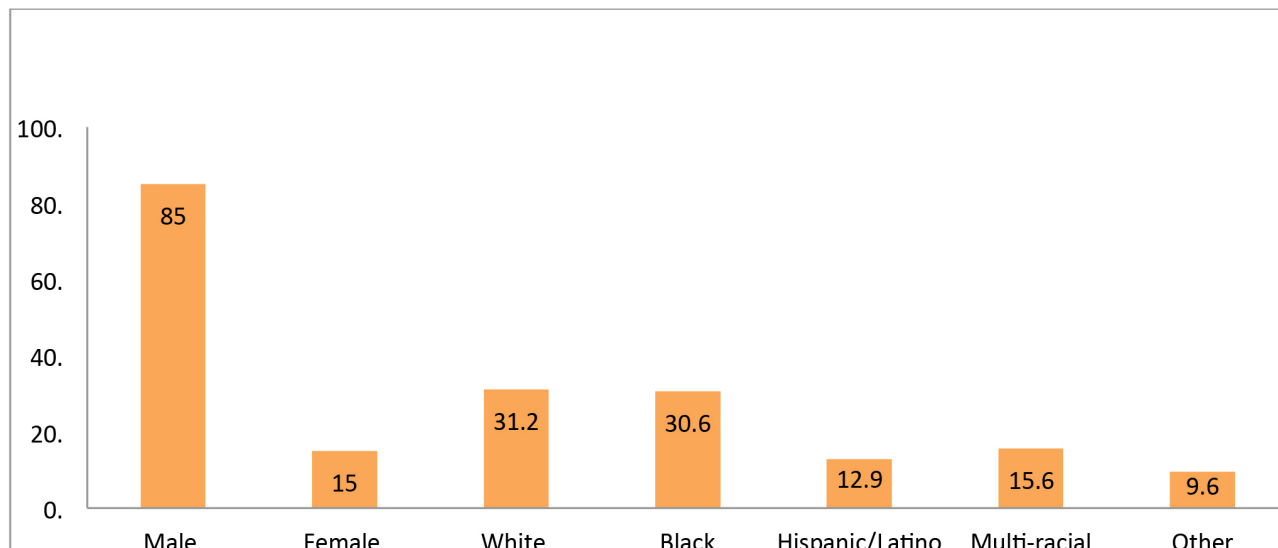
Region of Incarceration <sup>53</sup>	Number	Percentage
Capital District	23	6.8%
Central New York	26	7.6%
Finger Lakes	53	15.5%
Hudson Valley	166	48.7%
Mohawk Valley	25	7.3%
North Country	48	14.1%
<b>Facility Type</b>		
Medium	192	56.3%
Maximum	149	43.7%
<b>Average Length of Incarceration at Time of Survey</b>	10 years (122 months)	

<sup>53</sup> We did not have any survey respondents who were incarcerated in New York City, Long Island, Southern Tier, or Western New York.

With respect to socio-demographic characteristics of survey respondents (Table 2), the largest single-age cohort was people between 40-49 years. Incarcerated college students tended to be older than the “traditional,” i.e., non-incarcerated, college student: most students in our sample are 30 years of age or older (82.9%). Additionally, while male students are twice as likely as female students to be between the ages of 40 and 49 years of age (29.1% vs. 16.0%, respectively), women are nearly twice as likely as men to be 50 years of age or older (22.0% vs. 12.8%, respectively).

Nearly one-third of students responding to the survey (31.2%) were white, one-third were black/African-American (30.6%), and 21.3 percent Hispanic/Latino.<sup>54</sup>

**FIGURE 1: Incarcerated Student Survey Respondents: Demographic Characteristics (Percentage)**



Notably, 43.3 percent of students have at least one child under 18 years of age. Female students are more likely than their male peers to have children under 18 years of age (58.0% vs. 40.7%, respectively). Latino (46.5%) and white students (45.6%) are slightly more likely than black students (40.0%) to have children under 18 years of age.

<sup>54</sup> As reported in Chapter III, DOCCS data on the total population of incarcerated students showed that 25% are white, 48% are black, and 23% are Hispanic/Latino.

**TABLE 2: Student Survey Sample: Demographic Characteristics**

<b>Age Group (Years)</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
21 & younger	2	0.6%
22-24	12	3.5%
25-29	44	13.0%
30-34	76	22.4%
35-39	65	19.2%
40-49	92	27.1%
50 & older	48	14.2%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Black/African-American	102	30.6%
Latino/Hispanic	43	12.9%
White	104	31.2%
Multi-racial	52	15.6%
Other*	32	9.6%
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	290	85.0%
Women	51	15.0%
<b>Children Under 18 years</b>		
Yes	145	43.3%
No	190	56.7%
*Note: Because of a small sample size, students identifying as Asian/Pacific Islander or American Indian/Alaska Native were included in the Other category in the survey sample tallies.		

We also queried incarcerated students about their employment experiences prior to the arrest for which they were incarcerated (Table 3). Almost 60 percent had been employed, and of those, 77 percent were employed full-time. The types of employment varied with the top three industries for employment reported to have been installation, maintenance, and repair (12.4%), sales (12.4%), and construction and extraction (10.9%).

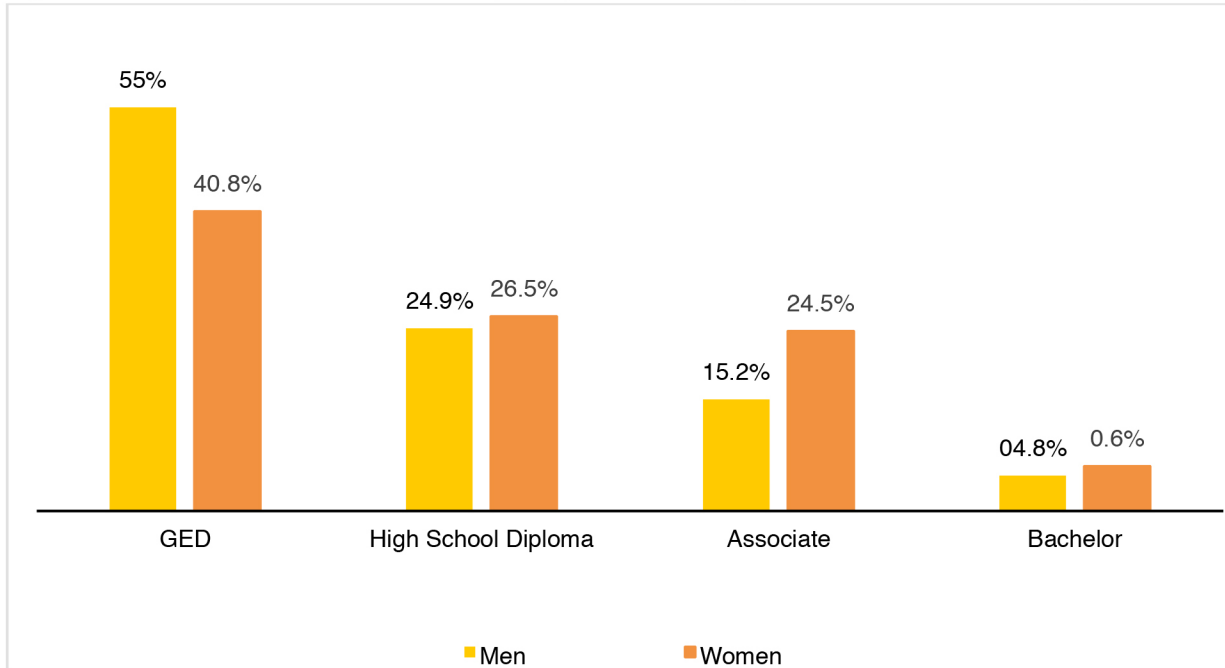
There were gender differences reported in employment; female students (68.0%) were more likely than male students (57.3%) to have been employed at the time of their arrest. The sales industry was also among the top three types of employment for women, similar to men at 12.1% but the other two industrial sectors differed. Women were employed in healthcare support (15.2%), personal care and services (15.2%).

**TABLE 3: Student Survey Sample: Demographic Characteristics**

Employed at Time Arrested	Number	Percentage
Yes	199	58.9%
No	139	41.1%
<b>Employed Full-time or Part-time</b>		
Full-time	143	76.9%
Part-time	43	23.1%
<b>Top 3 Industry Types of Employment*</b>		
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	24	12.4%
Sales and Related	24	12.4%
Construction and Extraction	21	10.9%
*Employment industry categories derive from the Standard Occupational Classification, US Bureau of Labor Statistics.		

Figures 2 and 3 show gender and racial differences in incarcerated students' level of education and experience. Women (24.5%) are more likely than men (15.2%) to have an associate degree. Latinos (55.8%) are twice as likely as their white (26.2%) and black (22.5%) peers to be the first in their family to attend college and female students (36.0%) are more likely than male students (28.2%) to be the first in their family to take college courses as well. As depicted in Figure 3, white students (47.1%) are more likely than black (34.3%) and Latino (23.3%) students to have taken college-level courses prior to being incarcerated. Female students (52.9%) are more likely than their male peers (37.2%) to have taken college-level courses before being incarcerated, however, men (34.9%) are slightly more likely than women (29.4%) to have taken college courses at other college programs during their incarceration.

**FIGURE 2: Incarcerated Student Survey Respondents: Highest Level of Education by Gender**



**FIGURE 3: Incarcerated Student Survey Respondents: First in Family to Take College Classes by Race/Ethnicity**

