

Higher Education in Prison: Results from a National and Regional Landscape Scan

Lois M. Davis, Michelle A. Tolbert, Matthew Mizel

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Preface

The role of higher educational attainment or postsecondary education (PSE) in prisons is receiving increased interest at the federal and state levels, and there is a potential for expanding such education that is unparalleled in recent decades. In particular, in July 2015, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced a new Second Chance Pell Pilot Program that will make incarcerated individuals who otherwise meet Title IV eligibility requirements now eligible for Pell Grants to help pay for their PSE and training, particularly within the next five years.

In partnership with RTI International, RAND was awarded a grant by the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation to undertake a national and regional landscape scan of higher education in prison to inform Great Lakes' strategic planning process. The Great Lakes funding region includes five study states: Arkansas, Iowa, Ohio, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The goal was to summarize key trends in higher education in prison, identify promising approaches or models that can help get more justice-involved adults into pathways of higher education attainment, and identify opportunities to help replicate or expand higher education opportunities within the Great Lakes funding region and nationally. To meet these objectives and goals, we relied on a national landscape scan and a regional landscape scan; for both scans, we used semi-structured interview protocols.

This working paper summarizes the study's results and the recommendations for investment based on those results to further the field of providing higher education in prisons.

RAND Justice Policy and RAND Education

The research reported here was primarily conducted in the RAND Justice Policy Program, which spans both criminal and civil justice system issues with such topics as public safety, effective policing, police-community relations, drug policy and enforcement, corrections policy, use of technology in law enforcement, tort reform, catastrophe and mass-injury compensation, court resourcing, and insurance regulation. Program research is supported by government agencies, foundations, and the private sector.

This program is part of RAND Justice, Infrastructure, and Environment, a division of the RAND Corporation dedicated to improving policy- and decisionmaking in a wide range of policy domains, including civil and criminal justice, infrastructure protection and homeland security, transportation and energy policy, and environmental and natural resource policy.

For more information about RAND Justice Policy, see www.rand.org/jie/justice-policy or contact the director at justice@rand.org.

This research was also conducted within RAND Education, a unit of the RAND Corporation. For more about RAND Education, visit www.rand.org/education.

Questions or comments about this report should be sent to the project leader, Lois M. Davis (Lmdavis@rand.org).

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Abbreviations

AA	Associate of Arts
AAS	Associate of Applied Science
ABE	adult basic education
ACS	Arkansas Correctional School
ACC	Arkansas Community Corrections
ADC	Arkansas Department of Correction
ADP	adult diploma program
AJT	Advanced Job Training
AS	Associate of Science
BOG	Board of Governors
BOP	Federal Bureau of Prisons
BPI	Bard Prison Initiative
CE	correctional education
CEO	Center for Employment Opportunities
CTE	career technical education
FDLTCC	Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College
DOC	department of corrections
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
ED	U.S. Department of Education
ESL	English as a Second Language
FASFA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FMU	full minimum unit
GED	General Education Development
HEA	Higher Education Act
HiSET	High School Equivalency Test
HSED	High School Equivalency Diploma
I-BEST	Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program
IDOC	Iowa Department of Corrections
IHEP	Institute for Higher Education Policy
MAP	Master Academic Plan
MATC	Milwaukee Area Technical College
MCEC	Minnesota Correctional Education Center
MNDOC	Minnesota Department of Corrections
NCCER	National Center for Construction Education and Research
NAAL	National Assessment of Adult Literacy
NJ-STEP	New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons
OCSS	Ohio Central School System
ODRC	Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections
OPEC	Ohio Penal Education Consortium
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PFS	pay for success
PIAAC	Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

PSE	postsecondary education
RVTS	Riverside Vocational Technical School
SB	Senate Bill
TASC	Test Assessing Secondary Completion
TDL	Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
WIDOC	Wisconsin Department of Corrections
WIOA	Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act

1. Introduction

Background

The Need for Data on the Value of Correctional Education (CE)

In 2008, the United States experienced a deep recession that led to large budget cuts to many states' CE programs. CE programs broadly encompass any number of educational activities that occur in prison, including vocational training and academic education. A 2013 RAND survey of state CE directors that looked back on the impact of the recession provided more detail on it; it showed that between fiscal years 2009 and 2012, states' CE budgets declined overall by 6 percent on average (Davis et al., 2014). The survey—which examined the cuts within prisons in states with small, medium, and large prison populations—showed that the largest impact was felt by states with larger prison populations. As a result, the capacity of academic education programs for incarcerated adults contracted: 20 states reduced the number of course offerings, and the number of academic teachers who were employees decreased by 24 percent on average. Overall, the number of adult students in academic programs decreased on average by 4 percent, although states with larger prison populations reported greater decreases in the number of students.

State CE directors emphasized the need for data so they could make the case to their states about why funding should be reinstated to CE programs and about what the return on investment is for these programs—that is, are they effective and cost-effective? RAND's study on the effectiveness of CE programs in the United States (Davis et al., 2013) addressed these two key questions. Specifically, RAND undertook a comprehensive literature review and meta-analysis of CE programs in the United States. Based on 30 years of research, the meta-analysis estimated that those who participated in CE programs had a 13 percentage point reduction in their risk of being reincarcerated three years post-release from prison. CE programs assessed as part of the study included adult education (literacy instruction and preparation for high school equivalency tests such as the General Education Development, GED, High School Equivalency Test, HiSET, or Test Assessing Secondary Completion, TASC), career technical education (CTE), apprenticeships, and, on a limited basis, academic degree programs.¹ The estimated reduction represents a dramatic decrease in the risk of being reincarcerated. Further, the study found that those individuals in prison who participated in postsecondary education (PSE) programs reduced their risk of recidivating by 16 percentage points compared to those who did not participate. This translates to a 49 percent reduction in the odds ratio for recidivism based on taking PSE

¹Each state also offers other types of education services, such as life skills and job preparation programs.

courses in prison, indicating that individuals who participate in higher education programs in prison are roughly half as likely to recidivate as those who do not. The study also provided data on the odds of obtaining post-release employment for those who participated in CTE and found that those odds were 28 percent higher for those who participated in these programs than they were for those who did not receive CTE.

Beyond finding that CE programs were effective, the study also found that they were highly cost-effective. CE programs are relatively low-cost programs, and the study estimated that for every dollar invested in prison education programs, it saves taxpayers on average between four and five dollars in three-year reincarceration costs. This is a conservative estimate because it only compares the direct costs of CE programs with the direct costs of reincarceration; it does not account for reductions in the indirect costs of reincarceration, such as the financial and emotional costs to crime victims and costs to the criminal justice system as a whole.

The Need to Provide PSE Programs in Prisons

The results of the 2014 PIAAC (Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) Prison Study, released in November 2016, shows the need to provide PSE programs in prisons.² Those results represent the most up-to-date information on literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving in technology-rich environment skills of adult inmates in the United States. In terms of the highest level of educational attainment, 64 percent of adult inmates reported having a high school credential and 30 percent reported having less than a high school degree (Rampey et al., 2016). Only 6 percent reported having an associate's degree or higher. The PIAAC reports five proficiency levels for literacy and numeracy (Below level 1, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, and Level 4/5). The survey found that 29 percent of incarcerated adults scored below Level 2 in literacy and that 52 percent scored below Level 2 on numeracy skills.

More evidence for providing PSE in prisons comes from a 2011 report of a 50-state analysis of postsecondary CE policy by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), which surveyed CE administrators in all 50 states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and received responses from 43 states and the BOP (Gorgol and Sponsler, 2011). The results indicated that during 2009–2010, only 6 percent of the total number of prisoners incarcerated in the prison systems that responded to the survey were enrolled in PSE. Moreover, the rate of completion of college degrees was quite low. States reported that about 9,900 incarcerated persons earned a certificate in the 2009–10 academic year and that 2,200 associates degrees and nearly 400 bachelor's degrees were awarded.

²The PIAAC replaced the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) as the U.S. comprehensive measure of adult literacy.

How States Provide and Fund PSE

When states provide PSE, they differ in how and what PSE opportunities in prison they will allow to be funded with state appropriations. PSE opportunities can range from CTE programs and apprenticeships that lead to industry-recognized credentials³ to credit-bearing programs that lead to PSE degrees (e.g., associate and bachelor's degrees and higher). Results from the 2013 survey of state CE directors conducted by RAND (Davis et al., 2014) found that 32 states reported offering some type of PSE. States with medium-sized or large prison populations were more likely to offer such courses than were smaller states. Also, when we talk about offering some type of PSE, in a number of instances, this could entail offering simply access to college correspondence courses versus actual in-prison college coursework or online courses.

Further, states vary in how PSE programs are funded. In the 2013 RAND survey, 28 states reported that PSE courses in prison were paid for by individuals and their families or by private funding such as foundations or individual donations (20 states). State funding was used by 16 states. Only 12 states used college or university funding to cover the costs of PSE, and very few states used inmate benefits or welfare funds. Larger states were less likely to rely on incarcerated individuals' personal or family finances and more likely to use state funding or college or university funding to cover PSE costs.

The Pell Pilot Program—An Opportune Time to Take Stock of PSE in Prison

Prior to the 1994 Crime Bill that President Bill Clinton signed into law, those who had been incarcerated in prison were eligible to receive Pell grants to help cover the costs of participating in college programs. But in 1994, Congress amended the Higher Education Act (HEA) to eliminate Pell Grant eligibility for students incarcerated in federal and state prisons. Doing so dramatically reduced the number of incarcerated individuals participating in these programs and the number of programs being offered. However, in recent years, there has been a resurgence and interest in expanding higher education in prison, particularly expansions that offer a path to degrees or industry-recognized credentials. We are now at a time when the role of higher educational attainment or PSE in prisons is receiving increased interest at the federal and state levels, and there is a potential for expanding such education that is unparalleled in recent decades. In particular, in July 2015, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced a new Second Chance Pell Pilot Program that made incarcerated individuals who otherwise meet Title IV eligibility requirements now eligible for Pell Grants to help pay for their PSE and training, particularly within the next five years. In announcing the pilot program, ED noted that “[h]igh-

³Industry-recognized credentials, referred to as nondegree credentials by the U.S. Department of Education, include certifications, licenses, and education certificates. Certifications are awarded by a certification body, are based on an examination, are time-limited, and must be renewed. Licenses are awarded by a government agency, are based on degree attainment, certifications, exam, and/or work experience, are time-limited, and must be renewed. Education certificates are awarded by an education institution after completing all requirements and are typically awarded for life.

quality correctional education—including postsecondary correctional education—has been shown to measurably reduce re-incarceration rates. By reducing recidivism, correctional education can ultimately save taxpayers money and create safer communities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The Pell Grant Pilot Program is an important initiative that is facilitating the expansion and creation of more PSE programs that lead to degree attainment. Out of 200 applicants, 69 colleges and universities in 42 states were awarded a grant under the Pell Pilot. Most are two-year public institutions, about a quarter are four-year institutions, and the remaining are private/nonprofit universities.

Objective

Within this context, in partnership with RTI International, the RAND Corporation was awarded a grant by the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation to undertake a national and regional landscape scan of higher education in prison to inform Great Lakes’ strategic planning process. The Great Lakes funding region includes five study states—Arkansas, Iowa, Ohio, Minnesota, and Wisconsin—and has received a total of eight Second Chance Pell Pilots; specifically, Minnesota has three pilots, Arkansas has two, and the remaining states have one pilot each. In this light, the goal was to summarize key trends in higher education in prison, identify promising approaches or models that can help get more justice-involved adults into pathways of higher education attainment, and identify opportunities to help replicate or expand higher education opportunities within the Great Lakes funding region and nationally.

Approach

To meet these objectives and goals, we relied on a national landscape scan and a regional landscape scan; for both scans, we used semi-structured interview protocols.

National Landscape Scan

To assess the current state of higher education in prison and where the field is headed, we conducted key informant interviews with 19 individuals during the summer and fall of 2016. The interviews were conducted with current and former U.S. Departments of Justice (DOJ) and ED staff with responsibility for CE or prisoner reentry, six researchers in the field, several educators who run college prison programs, representatives from several philanthropic organizations that support higher education programs in prison, representatives from several professional associations, and representatives from several states (other than those included in the regional landscape scan) whose higher education programs are considered to be innovative.

The topics addressed with the national stakeholders included:

- Recent national and regional trends or reforms that may be facilitating (or hindering) participation in higher education programs;
- Views on higher education programs for the 17–25-year-old age group;
- Views about what can be learned from the Second Chance Pell Pilot program;
- Funding of higher education programs at the federal and state levels;
- Existing programs or models that seemed promising or that might be replicated;
- Gaps in our knowledge about the field;
- Views of where the field will be five years from now.

Regional Landscape Scan

For the regional landscape scan, we conducted interviews with state CE administrators in each of the five study states: Arkansas, Iowa, Ohio, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. We also interviewed 16 representatives of colleges and universities providing PSE services to their states' prisons through a contract with the state, as part of the Second Chance Pell Pilot program, or with private funding.

The topics addressed in the regional interviews with the state CE administrators included:

- Structure of their CE system;
- Types of PSE programs offered in prisons and the credentials conferred;
- PSE programs' eligibility requirements and average length of time to complete;
- Types of students who enroll, including those who are between the ages of 17 and 25;
- Selection and funding for programs;
- Training provided to staff;
- Technology used to support the program;
- How the programs are evaluated;
- Five-year goals for the program.

Organization of This Executive Summary

Chapters 2 and 3 highlight the key findings of our national and regional scans, respectively, while the final chapter highlights key recommendations for investment to move the field forward.

2. National Landscape Scan Findings

Based on our national landscape scan, we find that higher education in prison is more of a priority now, with a number of factors serving to highlight attention at the national and state levels—most notably the recent Pell Pilot experiment.

States Differ in How They Provide PSE Opportunities in Prison

It is important to understand that states' policies and legislation determine how and what PSE opportunities in prison can be funded with state appropriations. For example, although North Carolina funds degree-bearing programs in its prisons, it is limited by law to only offer programs that result in a terminal Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree. Other states, like New Jersey, permit outside funding and in-kind department of corrections (DOC) resources to support associate and bachelor's degrees programs in prison. Most states only fund CTE programs and apprenticeships. Thus, when we talk about expanding higher education opportunities in prison, one must account for state policies and legislation that may impact what type of opportunities can be made available.

There Are Different Perspectives on What PSE Programs Should Be Offered

There are different perspectives about whether PSE programs in prison should lead to academic degrees or industry-recognized credentials. In general, the national stakeholders we interviewed felt that PSE programs in prison should result in some type of credential (be it an industry-recognized credential or a PSE degree) that is recognized by employers, colleges, and universities. Many also stressed that the credentials should be “stackable”—be in a sequence that a student can accumulate over time and that enable that student to move along a career pathway or up a career ladder—and that the programs and class credits be transferrable to other postsecondary institutions so individuals can continue their education upon release. There are also differing viewpoints about whether to focus on programs that lead to degrees aimed at developing credentials and occupational skills in specific fields (e.g., business administration, computer science, welding, etc.) or whether to focus on offering a liberal arts education. The third area where experts differ is on what type of program model should be used; such models include in-person instruction, a hybrid model, or online courses only. Some feel strongly that only in-person instruction should be used, whereas others feel a hybrid model (a combination of in-person instruction and online coursework) is more cost-effective and has the potential to reach more individuals.

Although interviewees had mixed views about whether higher education programs should be targeted to the younger prison population (e.g., those between 17 and 25), they noted that younger adults may often not be ready to focus on college programming and, instead, may need help in addressing other basic educational deficits—such as remedial education and earning a high school equivalency degree.

These varied views on the question of where to focus higher education programs are reflected in our interviews. For example, one interviewee questioned the focus on the younger age group, arguing that this population represents a very small fraction of the prison population, while another interviewee argued that it was important to have programs targeted at this age group because of the potential impact you could have on youth given their age. Another argued that if you are going to work with this age group, you need to incentivize them. Finally, one interviewee felt that the issue of time to release from prison is more important to consider than age group—that is, those who are going to be in prison for a long time may not be the best target for PSE programs.

High School Bridge Programs Have Potential

In the United States, as noted in Chapter 1, only 64 percent of adult prison inmates report having a high school credential, with many scoring at low levels on literacy and math skills (Rampey et al., 2016). Because of the lower educational attainment among this population, most state DOCs focus on adult basic education (ABE) and on having individuals earn their high school equivalency degrees while incarcerated. However, all too often that is seen as the end-point of their education while in prison, with PSE programs seen as optional.

Given that many incarcerated individuals have basic educational deficits and lack a high school diploma or equivalency degree, interviewees emphasized the need to consider a path toward higher education in prison and to build a continuum of educational opportunities for those incarcerated. For example, one interviewee noted his hope that the associate degree would be considered as the GED or high school equivalency degree is now in prison education; another noted that there was not enough attention being paid to how to link high school equivalency infrastructure with PSE; and several interviewees noted the importance of considering education programs in the wider context of what programming is offered to incarcerated individuals. Within this context, high school bridge programs were cited as having the potential to serve as a bridge to higher education in prison for many individuals.

Length of Time it Takes Students to Complete a PSE Program Needs to Be Taken into Account in Designing Programs

Interviewees recognized that it often takes incarcerated students longer to complete a program than it would take if they were out in the community. For example, one state CE

director estimated that it typically takes at least 2 ½ years for an incarcerated student to earn an associate degree. There are a number of factors that affect a student's progress, including being transferred to a facility prior to completing a course or program, DOC policies to transfer individuals nearing their sentence to a minimum security facility that may mean a break in their coursework, and DOCs placing a higher priority on programs (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy, reentry) other than PSE programs.

Thus, interviewees emphasized the need to structure programs so students earn at a minimum a general education certificate and/or a set of transferable credits before leaving prison, with the option of continuing their education out in the community. This also underscores the need to think about college programs extending out into the community and how to help individuals make that transition upon release.

PSE Programs Should Address the Reentry Needs of Students

Unlike other college students, those students leaving prison and continuing their education out in the community can face a number of reentry challenges that can affect their success. Reentry is a challenging time, as individuals must also try to find housing, employment, reunite with family and children, and deal with other personal issues, such as depression or substance abuse problems. Thus, many feel the pressure to work full-time while also going to school part-time or full-time. This can compete with their desire to continue their college education or other training out in the community. Balancing work, school, family, and other responsibilities can be a real challenge. Given this, the interviewees felt that it is critical that colleges and PSE programs recognize the importance of working with and facilitating contact with reentry providers to help ensure a smooth transition of students back to the community.

There Is a Growing Interest in Promoting Technology Access in Prisons

Most states prohibit access to the Internet for security reasons. At the same time, there is growing interest in expanding the use of technology in higher education for justice-involved populations, including the use of tablets to support educational instruction, providing access to online educational material (e.g., online research, education programs such as Khan Academy, and open education resources), and using learning management systems (e.g., Blackboard).

Technology can help prepare students to join our globally networked society; provide students with access to online assessments or research for college coursework; expand the professional development resources available to instructors; and broaden the reach of CE and reentry services. However, program administrators and faculty face a number of barriers that prevent them from using technology to support CE. These barriers include security concerns, cost, and perceptions of policymakers, correctional officials, and the public that advanced technologies are not appropriate for incarcerated individuals. Despite these barriers, a growing number of CE administrators and practitioners are exploring different approaches to providing

online instructional materials and tools to support student learning. Yet there is no centralized place for them to go to learn about these services. They do not know what technologies are being piloted by different states and facilities and what the costs, benefits, and effects of those technologies are.

When we asked interviewees about technology access in prisons, one commented that the use of technology in education is advancing so quickly in the general population that it is forcing the hand of corrections but that corrections is still behind the curve. Another interviewee, an advocate for technology in prisons, noted that trends in CTE and the computer-based testing required for the 2014 GED are helping to force systems to open up to the use of secure Internet for testing purposes and that there is a need to curate the online information being made available.

The Second Chance Pell Pilot Program Is Viewed as an Important Advance for PSE Opportunities in Prison

As noted in Chapter 1, we are at a time when the role of higher educational attainment is receiving increased interest at the federal and state levels, and the potential for expanding such education is unparalleled in recent decades. The Pell Pilot Program helps pay for incarcerated individuals' PSE and training. As noted, in announcing the pilot program, ED noted that “[h]igh-quality correctional education—including postsecondary correctional education—has been shown to measurably reduce re-incarceration rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). By reducing recidivism, correctional education can ultimately save taxpayers money and create safer communities.” Out of 200 applicants, 69 colleges and universities in 42 states were awarded a grant under the Pell Pilot, including eight colleges in the Great Lakes region.

A number of interviewees discussed the importance of the Second Chance Pell Pilot program in helping to further PSE opportunities for justice-involved populations and in serving as an important infusion of funds by making Pell grants available to those incarcerated in state or federal prison. The Pell Pilot was also seen as helping to engage a range of stakeholders at the federal and state levels around the issue of higher education in prison. Interviewees had high hopes about what could be learned from the Pell Pilot, including the potential to look at some of the more boutique models in terms of scalability, to look at a wider range of programs, and to look at the applicability of different types of models to different states, populations, and correctional facilities.

Funding of PSE Programs Over the Long-Term Remains a Key Concern

Historically, when the 1994 Crime Bill eliminated Pell grant eligibility for incarcerated individuals and then when the Incarcerated Youth Offender Grants ended in 2010,⁴ many states lost important sources of federal funding for PSE. States also vary in the degree to which state funds are used to support these programs. In general, there has not been a steady stream of funding for PSE programs, which has limited the number of PSE programs and access to them. Given this context, the 2015 Pell Pilot was viewed as an important infusion of funds for supporting and helping to expand PSE programs, although many interviewees felt there was still a need to consider long-term options for funding these programs at the state and federal levels. It is noteworthy that many of the Pell Pilot grant applicants indicated that their states did not provide financial aid for these programs. This is consistent with the RAND 2013 survey results that found that PSE in prison was paid for primarily by the individual inmate (28 states), by the use of family finances (16 states), or by private funding, such as foundations or individual donations (20 states) (Davis et al., 2014).

Some states have used other funding sources for PSE programs. For example, Minnesota uses prison industry funds to help fund its associate degree programs in prison. California has two key funding sources, including the Board of Governor's (BOG) Fee Waiver, which covers enrollment fees for qualifying low-income students, and Senate Bill (SB) 1391, which allows community colleges to offer in-person courses in prisons and jails and to be fully reimbursed for both credit and noncredit courses. Interviewees commented on the need to better understand the different funding models available to states.

There Are Remaining Gaps in Our Knowledge About Effective Higher Education Programs in Prison

Interviewees noted that there are remaining gaps in our knowledge about the effectiveness of these programs and cited the RAND 2013 study on the effectiveness of CE that identified the need for stronger research designs to improve the quality of the evidence base and the need to get “inside the black box” of CE programs. Interviewees commented that research was still needed in several key areas to inform program and policy decisions: (1) information about what PSE programs are most effective and why (e.g., what instructional models are more effective; how much does dosage matter, what program elements and supports are associated with effective

⁴The Incarcerated Youth Offenders Grants, formally titled the Grants to States for Workplace and Community Transition Training for Incarcerated Individuals, provided grants to state CE agencies to assist and encourage incarcerated youth in acquiring functional literacy, life, and job skills by pursuing PSE certificates, associate of arts degrees, and bachelor's degrees. The target population included individuals who (1) were incarcerated in a state prison; (2) were eligible to be released or paroled within seven years; (3) were 35 years old or younger; (4) were not convicted of some specific crimes; and (5) had obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent (Tolbert and Pearson 2011).

programs); and (2) the need for comprehensive outcomes and impact evaluations that go beyond measuring just recidivism and that also look at educational outcomes (e.g., educational progression and attainment, earning of stackable credentials), impact on individuals, families, and communities, and employment outcomes.

In Thinking About the Future, the Focus Is Mostly on System Transformation

When interviewees were asked about their thoughts on where they hope the field of higher education in prison will be in five years, most focused on system transformation. This included education being seen as an integral part of rehabilitation, about the need to better engage incarcerated students in the educational process, about the hope that college programs or PSE becomes mandatory, about the hope that there is a proliferation of high-quality college programs in prison, and about the hope that colleges and universities see higher education as central parts of their missions to provide college opportunities to justice-involved individuals. They also discussed their hope that Pell grant eligibility is reinstated for those who are incarcerated in state and federal prisons and the need for aggregated investment in higher education programs, including both federal and state funding. Several also spoke about the importance of technology in higher education in prison and the need to train individuals to be competitive in the 21st century workforce.

3. Regional Landscape Scan Findings

Based on our regional landscape scan, we identified a number of similarities and differences across the five study states—Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin—in terms of their corrections and CE populations, higher education programs, technology access, and reentry policies and initiatives.

Corrections and CE Populations Vary Across Study States

The five study states vary in state population, prison population, and number of prisons. Although Ohio's state and prison populations are the largest (11.6 million), Arkansas incarcerates the greatest number of adults per capita (17,707 of its nearly 3 million population, or 0.6 percent). Wisconsin has the largest number of prisons (36), followed by Arkansas (30), Ohio (27), Minnesota (10), and Iowa (9). Similar to national trends, all five states incarcerate a disproportionately high number of males and black adults. In addition, their corrections populations are aging, with the largest percentage of incarcerated adults between the ages of 26 and 50.

The demographic makeup of incarcerated individuals who enroll in the states' CE programs mirrors that of their overall corrections populations, with the exception of age. The states report that older students more often enroll, persist, and earn a credential, possibly because they are more likely to meet eligibility criteria common across programs and have the maturity and motivation critical for success. However, the five study states differ in the number of adults enrolled in their CE programs. For example, over half of Ohio's incarcerated population was enrolled in an education program in 2016. The other states enrolled less than a quarter of their populations.

Management Structure of CE Programs Varies Across States

While the CE programs in each of the five states are managed at the state level, the management structure varies across the states. Arkansas, Ohio, and Wisconsin are designated school districts/systems, which means they are legally recognized as an administrative agency for public elementary and secondary education. In some cases, this status gives them some autonomy from their DOCs. The Arkansas Correctional School District, for example, reports directly to the Arkansas Board of Corrections, which is comprised of Governor appointees. In contrast to Arkansas, Ohio, and Wisconsin, the CE programs and divisions in Iowa and Minnesota are divisions *within* their state DOCs.

Importantly, Minnesota and Ohio have also formed PSE consortiums to help align their prison-based PSE services. In Minnesota, the consortium members agree on a set rate for each

course. In Ohio, members of the Ohio Penal Education Consortium (OPEC) meet regularly to coordinate services, troubleshoot, and share lessons learned; they also collaborate on advocating to the state for future funding and support.

States Vary in Their Approaches to Higher Education Programs

The states vary in the degree to which they emphasize CTE or apprenticeship programs versus academic degree programs.

CTE and Apprenticeships

The most common form of higher education in the prisons of the five study states is non-credit CTE and/or apprenticeship programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials. These programs are funded with state appropriations and, in most cases, are supplemented with federal CTE funding. To be eligible for CTE or apprenticeship programs, an incarcerated individual typically needs a high school credential, must meet reading and math requirements, be infraction-free within a given period of time, and be within a certain timeframe to release (but have enough time to complete a course or program). Program completion times range from two days (e.g., forklifting) to four years, depending on the type of program being offered; apprenticeships typically require the most time.

Associate Degree Programs or Higher

In the five states, the number of associate degree programs available to incarcerated individuals dropped significantly after Pell Grant eligibility was eliminated in 1994 and further when the State Grants for Incarcerated Youth Offenders ended in 2010. Despite this, Minnesota and Ohio have managed to maintain some college programs in their prisons using innovative funding sources and judicious programmatic policies. Minnesota, for example, funds an associate degree program using earnings from its prison industry (MINNCOR),⁵ which means that it can offer college education in prison at no cost to the state or taxpayers. It is able to do this because the leadership of MINNCOR agreed that higher education helps incarcerated individuals gain important skills that can be applied to their prison jobs and post-release employment.

None of the five states have maintained funding for four-year academic degree programs, although incarcerated individuals with the ability to self-pay can enroll in correspondence courses that lead to a four-year degree or higher.

⁵MINNCOR employs incarcerated individuals to provide manufactured goods and services to government entities, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and private sector companies in the state.

Privately Funded PSE Programs

Some privately funded PSE programs are also available to a small number of incarcerated students or are being established in four of the study states. The Arkansas State University–Newport offers an Associate of Arts (AA) in General Studies at two correctional facilities through a university scholarship that pays for about 40 incarcerated students to take one three-credit class per semester. The university has recently been able to expand this program through the Second Chance Pell Pilot program, enabling offerings per semester to more students and reducing the program completion time to 2–3 years.

Iowa has two postsecondary scholarship programs—the Skylark Program and Friends of Iowa Prisoners—that provide funding to incarcerated women for in-person PSE instruction. Also, Grinnell College, a private liberal arts college in Iowa, offers college coursework at a male facility. The coursework is offered through two programs—a liberal arts 60-credit college program offered by Grinnell faculty and non-credit courses taught by Grinnell undergraduates for enrichment purposes only. Approximately 15 students per semester are enrolled in the liberal arts program and, on average, take a year and a half to complete 30 credits (which results in a First Year of College Award) and three years to complete 60 credits. The college is committed to funding 15 students per semester using college funding, alumni donations, and seed money from the Bard Prison Initiative’s (BPI’s)⁶ Consortium of Liberal Arts in Prison and other foundation support.

BPI also is working in two other states—Wisconsin and Minnesota—to establish liberal arts in prison programs. Wisconsin’s Felmers O. Chaney Advocacy Board, composed of a voluntary group of concerned Milwaukeeans, is working with BPI to create a four-year degree program in a state correctional facility. The Board and BPI are partnering with Cardinal Stritch University and are in conversations with faculty members at several area universities, including Marquette and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. BPI is helping to facilitate these negotiations and provide seed money and curriculum guidance.

Also with the support of BPI, Augsburg College in Minnesota has been exploring the possibility of offering a four-year liberal arts degree in a state prison. No agreement, however, is currently in place. Augsburg is interested in this work because of its culture of radical hospitality and the mission of the college. It also has a history of offering higher education programs to the incarcerated population.

⁶BPI offers incarcerated individuals an opportunity to earn an associate or bachelors of arts degree from Bard College in areas such as the humanities, sciences, and the arts. It created the Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison to support other innovative college-in-prison programs throughout the country.

Second Chance Pell Pilots

Beginning in 2016, the federal Second Chance Pell Pilot program has led to more PSE programs in all five states: Eight pilots across the five states, with Minnesota having three, Arkansas having two, and the rest of the states with one pilot each. Most of the pilots began offering classes in January 2017, but a few began classes in the fall of 2016.

Table 1 highlights the features of the Second Chance Pell Pilot programs in the five study states. As shown in the table, the size of the pilots range from 17 incarcerated students to over 1,000 students. The programs include an AA in General Studies, an AA in Entrepreneur Studies, an Associate of Science (AS) in Business and Financial Services, and several education certificates in various trades. Programs are expected to take 1–3 years to complete. Most programs are being offered in-person, but a few are using a hybrid model that combines in-person, video, and online instruction (South Central College in Minnesota and Milwaukee Area Technical College in Wisconsin). Ashland University in Ohio is providing instruction entirely online, with some support by an onsite coordinator. All but two of the postsecondary institutions have experience working in prisons, but only a few are using the Pell Pilot to expand existing programs (Arkansas State University–Newport in Arkansas and Ashland University in Ohio). Most of the pilots are relying entirely on the facility to provide training to their instructors, with a few supplementing that training with a college/university orientation.

All the participating colleges and universities noted that the incarcerated population has presented them with some unique challenges in terms of processing financial aid. Common challenges include addressing barriers to Pell Grant eligibility, such as incarcerated males failing to register for selective service, loan defaults, and an inability to provide or verify requested information (e.g., tax records or, if the student is under 24, parents’ income records). Given these challenges, some of the students end up not being Pell-eligible, which means the college

Table 1. Features of Second Chance Pell Pilots in Study States

State	College/University	Program	Size	Average Length	Instruction Approach	Staff Training	Prior Prison Experience
Arkansas	ASU–Newport	AA in General Studies	Up to 150 students across two facilities	2–3 years	In-person	Facility training; informal orientation by university	Has funded AA program for 40 incarcerated students each semester
	Shorter College	AA in Entrepreneur Studies	283 students across five facilities	2 years, but students in community corrections facilities take modules and must complete post-release	In-person	Facility training; orientation by college	Not in recent years, but has experience with corrections population

State	College/ University	Program	Size	Average Length	Instruction Approach	Staff Training	Prior Prison Experience
Iowa	Iowa Central Community College	Welding Technology and Industrial Machinist Certificate Program	Intending to enroll up to 300 students across 2 facilities	2 years	In-person	Facility training	New to providing education services to prisons
Minnesota	Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College	AS in Business and Financial Services	Intending to enroll 45 students in one facility	2 years	In-person	Facility training	Never worked in prisons before
	Pine Technical Community College	Manufacturing Production Technology certificate	30 students across two facilities	1 year	In-person	Facility training	Has provided education to another facility with a DOL grant
	South Central College	Mechatronics Industrial Maintenance certificate	24 students in 1 facility		Hybrid model (mediated tele-presence)	Facility training	Previously provided CTE services to nearby facilities
Ohio	Ashland University	AA in General Studies	1,040 students in 10 OH facilities and 14 in WV and LA	2½ years	Online (tablet with videos instructor and in-person coordinator support)	Facility training; 2-day training provided by university	Has a long history providing education services to prisons
Wisconsin	Milwaukee Area Technical College	Computer Number Controls certificate program; AA in General Studies	17 students, but will be rolling out to 12 facilities by 9/17	16 weeks for certificate; 2 years for AA	Certificate is in-person; AA will use hybrid model	Community Corrections orientation	Provided instruction with the Incarcerated Youth Offender Grant

Source: State interviews.

and universities need to figure out what to do with those students. Some of the pilots also reported that the Pell grant does not fully cover the cost of their programs. Two of the pilots, as a result, rent textbooks to their students for a lower cost. Another pilot supplements the program with an institutional scholarship to cover the difference in cost. Several of the participating colleges and universities also expressed concern about the reentry process; although it falls outside the scope of their pilots, they still see it as a need that must be addressed to ensure the success of their students.

The Pell Pilot also offers participating colleges and universities with a number of opportunities. Specifically, it is allowing them to access new student populations and further the missions of their institutions. It is also providing them with an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of high-risk communities and improve the economic prospects for their states. On a

more basic level, the Pell Pilot has given the college and universities a chance to develop or improve their relationships with their state corrections agencies and nearby prisons.

All the participating colleges and universities indicated a desire to evaluate their programs to provide evidence that prison-based PSE programs are worth future state and federal investments. However, at the time of the regional scan, none of the eight pilots had begun an evaluation.

Use of Technology Varies Across the Study States

Some of the states, in particular Ohio, are providing their CE students with limited Internet access to support their coursework. Four of the study states are currently using tablets maintained by outside vendors to support instruction or are piloting tablets in some of their facilities. Minnesota and Ohio also allow incarcerated students limited, secure access to websites and educational applications, and Ohio has computer-aided instruction in every state prison.

Minnesota, for example, allows its corrections population to personally purchase JPay tablets with some education content. It also uses a secure offender network to allow incarcerated students limited, secure access to approved websites and educational applications. Wisconsin is a Google School District, which uses Chrome devices to provide students with instructional applications to improve their literacy skills. These devices, which are available in the 19 facilities where education is offered, also support communication between the students and their instructors. Ohio, however, has computer-aided instruction labs in every state prison. Education staff are also able to access the Internet onsite, and students are allowed restricted Internet access through kiosks. And in 2016, Ohio implemented a tablet technology pilot in restrictive housing to allow students to continue programming outside their classes.

All Five States Have Supportive CE or Reentry Initiatives in Place

PSE in all five of the study states is supported by statewide articulation and transfer agreements⁷ that enable individuals who earn credits while incarcerated to apply them to a public two- or four-year college program upon release. These agreements help incarcerated students transition to programs post-release by ensuring that earned credits and credentials are recognized by other postsecondary institutions.

In addition, three of the five study states (Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota) are participating in the Results First Initiative, a joint project of the Pew Charitable Trusts and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation that works with state governments to conduct cost-benefit analyses of their criminal justice policies and programs. Moreover, the fact that all five states are

⁷Articulation and transfer agreements are agreements between two or more colleges and universities that typically match the institutions' courses or requirements to facilitate student transitions.

participating in the Pell Pilot means that partnerships between colleges and DOCs are developing or being strengthened to improve access to PSE programs within each of the states.

4. Recommendations for Investment

Based on the findings from the national and regional landscape scans, we identified nine recommendations for investment, which are discussed below. The recommendations represent both near-term opportunities to impact higher education in prison at the national and regional levels and opportunities that may require a longer-term horizon. They address the following areas:

- Supporting a national survey of higher education in prison;
- Developing the evidence base by supporting outcomes evaluations of the Pell Pilot Program and of the *Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education* demonstration project, and helping to expand or replicate other promising programs;
- Supporting pilots of bridge programs that help build on-ramps to college education and PSE programs that extend college programs from inside the prison to out in the community;
- Supporting an assessment of funding options for PSE programs, including supporting a pay-for-success (PFS) demonstration project;
- Promoting technology access by PSE programs and for CE in general;
- Creating a clearinghouse of PSE in prison;
- Supporting opportunities to help expand higher education in prison in the Great Lakes region.

1. Support National Survey of Higher Education in Prison

As part of its work on CE, RAND conducted a national survey of state CE directors in 2013 that examined how state CE directors provided CE in prisons. But much has changed since then with respect to how many states are now offering higher education programs in prison, including PSE programs and CTE programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials. There are a number of questions that the national stakeholders we interviewed identified, including the need for basic information to understand how higher education programs in prison are provided today and the need to help identify promising approaches. Such questions include:

- What types of PSE programs are being offered and by whom?
- Who is eligible and how many students are participating in them?
- What types of instructional models and supports are being used?
- How is technology being leveraged?
- How are these programs funded?
- What outcomes and metrics of success are being tracked?

- What state policies and legislation support or hinder PSE in prison?

In light of this, we recommend funding a national survey that captures this detailed information—information that would be important in helping states and national leaders understand what the landscape of higher education programs in prison looks like today, understand the different approaches states are taking, understand the range of technology being used, and begin developing a picture of promising programs and of what outcomes are being tracked.

2. Support Outcomes Evaluations of Pell Pilot Program

National interviewees cited the Second Chance Pell Pilot as an important opportunity to understand the effect of providing access to Pell grants to incarcerated individuals in state and federal prisons, to assess what program models are effective, and to assess the short- and long-term education, employment, and recidivism outcomes for those participating in these programs. Specifically, interviewees felt that **not** doing such an outcomes evaluation would be a lost opportunity in understanding how reinstating the Pell grants impacts the field of PSE in prison and benefits incarcerated students who desire to continue their education. Although ED is evaluating the Pell Pilot grantees, it is only conducting a process evaluation to understand how the funding mechanisms work for this population. It is not an outcomes evaluation per se, nor is it testing the different program models.

Given this, we recommend supporting outcomes evaluations of the Pell Pilot sites that could help address two key research questions: How best to prepare and support incarcerated individuals who are eligible for Pell grants, and which program models of instruction and curriculum delivery are most effective in achieving such outcomes as changes in motivation and self-perception, academic progress, educational persistence and attainment, and post-release employment. Such evaluations should focus on programs that have sufficient sample sizes, that are using different program models of instruction (e.g., in-person instruction, online courses only, hybrid model), that lead to specific degrees or credentials, that have a treatment and control group, and that offer educational supports, such as education and career counseling, mentoring, tutoring, computer labs, or assistance with developing an educational reentry plan. Doing such evaluations lends itself to a consortium of foundations and to having the Pell Pilot sites agree on a common set of outcome indicators to measure so that comparisons can be made across sites.

3. Help Build Evidence Base for Other Promising Programs

Beyond conducting outcomes evaluations of the Pell Pilot programs, interviewees identified other opportunities for furthering the evidence base. First, they pointed to the need for funding an outcomes evaluation of the *Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education* demonstration project to inform the field about the effectiveness of PSE programs out in the community and, in particular, of this program model. Pathways is an innovative example of PSE programming

being conducted in three states—North Carolina, Michigan, and New Jersey—where an incarcerated individual’s college education begins two years prior to release from prison and then continues two years post-release out in the community. Because two of the states in the demonstration project—Michigan and North Carolina—include a randomized design and have sufficient sample sizes, they are especially well-suited to an outcomes evaluation to understand the effectiveness of this type of PSE program model.

Second, we recommend helping to scale-up or replicate privately funded programs. The national interviewees identified the following examples of such programs: the Bard Prison Initiative⁸; Prison University Project⁹ at San Quentin; Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison¹⁰; Boston University’s Prison Education Program¹¹; and St. Louis University Prison Program¹². In addition, interviewees identified consortium models like the BPI’s Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison¹³ and the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons Consortium (NJ-STEP)¹⁴ as promising examples of ways to expand PSE programs in prison. We also recommend providing funding support for academic researchers and program administrators who are interested in exploring the feasibility of replicating these different program models in their own state or community.

4. Support Pilots of Bridge Programs to Help Build On-Ramps to College Education

The national interviewees cited the need for bridge programs as a path toward higher education in prison, starting with high school equivalency programs that serve as a bridge to individuals transitioning to college programs, including CTE programs. This was seen as being an important opportunity for creating a continuum of educational opportunities in prison while also recognizing that a number of individuals in prison need to address basic educational deficits and earn their high school equivalency. Therefore, we recommend supporting pilots of bridge programs that are designed to build those on-ramps to higher education and that allow students to address educational deficits and earn high school equivalency credentials as they transition to college coursework.

A number of research projects are examining program models that align ABE, high school equivalency, and PSE services *in the general population*, such as the career pathways approach.

⁸<http://bpi.bard.edu/what-we-do/>

⁹<https://prisonuniversityproject.org/>

¹⁰<http://www.hudsonlink.org/>

¹¹<http://sites.bu.edu/pep/>

¹²<https://www.slu.edu/prison-program/associate-of-arts-degree-program>

¹³<http://consortium.bard.edu/>

¹⁴<http://njstep.newark.rutgers.edu/>

Given this, there is a need for additional research and pilots to determine if these approaches can be effectively applied to CE. In addition to supporting the development of pilot bridge programs, we also recommend supporting the exploration of the applicability of dual enrollment or accelerated learning program models to CE, such as the Accelerated Opportunities initiative¹⁵ (<http://www.jff.org/initiatives/accelerating-opportunity>) and Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST) (<http://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/i-best/>).¹⁶

5. Support Programs that Extend College Programs from Inside to Out in the Community

In recognition that the amount of time it takes an incarcerated student to complete a program is typically longer than it would take to do so out in the community, the national interviewees we talked to encouraged structuring educational programs in prison that allow students to earn at a minimum a stackable industry-recognized credential, a general education certificate, and/or a set of transferable credits before leaving prison, with the option of continuing their education out in the community. This underscores the importance of setting up college programs that are part of a career pathway, that extend out into the community, and that help individuals make that transition upon release. In addition, it underscores the need to support the alignment between CE programs and statewide articulation agreements so the credits students earn while incarcerated can be transferred and applied to college coursework upon release. In fact, ED’s Reentry Education Framework (<https://lincs.ed.gov/reentryed/>), developed by RTI International, recommends career pathways and developing continuum-spanning facility- and community-based education programs.

Based on these needs, we recommend providing seed funding or establishing a competitive grant opportunity that encourages programs to structure their course offerings with these goals in mind. In addition, we recommend prioritizing support for college programs that provide reentry supports, such as navigators and/or linkages to reentry services and resources out in the community. RAND’s process evaluation of the Pathways Program in North Carolina and related research has emphasized how critical it is to address the full spectrum of needs returning students have through reentry services to help ensure their success in continuing their education. The Great Lakes regional scan interviewees also stressed the need for greater reentry supports.

¹⁵The Accelerating Opportunities is a four-year, multistate effort that allows programs flexibility in developing programs that build on the Integrated Basic Skills and Training (I-BEST) model and the Breaking Through model (which focuses on contextualizing basic skills instruction) to provide the support services needed to help students persist to completion while delivering consistent and coherent professional development.

¹⁶Washington State’s I-BEST program pairs a basic-skills instructor and an instructor from a professional-technical program to teach together in the same classroom. Students work with two teachers in the classroom: One provides job training and the other teaches basic skills in reading, math, or English language.

6. Support Assessment of Funding Options for Higher Education Programs in Prison

One of the critical issues with respect to the long-term viability of higher education programs in prison is how to finance them. National interviewees commented that it is critical to reinstate or establish state assistance programs in this area. We recommend supporting the development of case studies of promising approaches by states to fund higher education programs to capture lessons learned and to disseminate the information broadly among the states. As examples of promising approaches to funding higher education programs, interviewees pointed to Minnesota's use of prison industry funds and California's use of two funding sources for its PSE programs in prison—the BOG Fee Waiver and SB 1391, which allows community colleges to offer in-person courses in prisons and jails and to be fully reimbursed. In addition, there is a growing movement among states such as in California, Ohio, and Maryland in implementing or broadening policies and legislation to give individuals' time off their sentences for attaining educational milestones, thus helping to make education a more integral part of rehabilitation. The support by philanthropy of these programs and the Pell Pilot experiment has been an important source of funding, but there is also a need to help states identify long-term solutions.

We also recommend considering funding a PFS demonstration project of PSE programs. In our view, the field of higher education in prison is ripe for such a demonstration project.¹⁷ PFS models, primarily outside the CE field and corrections system, are being examined by federal agencies and other organizations.¹⁸ Further, we recommend monitoring such studies to determine if the resulting models may be applicable to funding PSE in prison. In addition, it is worth exploring whether PFS is a promising strategy to help address the long-term funding needs of higher education programs in prison.

7. Promote Technology Access in CE

As discussed in Chapter 2, technology can help strengthen the education services available to incarcerated students and provide more professional development opportunities and classroom tools for instructors. For these reasons, a growing number of states and correctional facilities are exploring ways to address barriers to technology access in prison, with security issues being the primary concern. Yet there is no centralized place for them to go to learn about different approaches. We, therefore, recommend documenting and disseminating lessons learned from

¹⁷PFS is a financing mechanism that shifts financial risk from a traditional funder—usually the government—to a new investor, who provides up-front capital to scale an evidence-based program to improve outcomes for a vulnerable population. If an independent evaluation shows that the program achieved agreed-upon outcomes, then the investment is repaid by the traditional funder. If not, the investor takes the loss. <http://pfs.urban.org/pfs-101/content/what-pay-success-pfs>

¹⁸See the U.S. Department of Education Pay for Success initiative for examples of PFS initiatives being undertaken: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/pay-for-success/index.html>.

early implementers of advanced technologies in CE and providing a platform (e.g., website) for sharing that information. We also recommend creating an online repository of high-quality resources for incarcerated students that meet security standards and support collaborative learning. Further, we recommend evaluating existing online CE programs to document the benefits, challenges, and limitations of providing instruction virtually to a population that has some unique learning needs.

8. Create a Clearinghouse on PSE in Prison

Although there are a variety of PSE programs being administered across states and within states, there is a dearth of information available *about* such programs. We recommend creating an online clearinghouse to serve as a repository of research and evaluations of CE programs in the United States—sort of a “one-stop shop” for innovative and evidence-based practices in the field. The clearinghouse could also provide a curated set of resources, including a list of funding opportunities, practice guides, and updates on relevant state and federal policies and initiatives that could affect PSE in prisons and reentry. In addition, the clearinghouse could provide a means for encouraging and guiding evaluations to further our understanding of what works and does not work and to strengthen the evidence base for PSE in prison.

9. Support Programs in the Great Lakes Funding Region

Overall, the study states’ PSE programs are standard; most include CTE and apprenticeship programs that result in industry-recognized credentials. Except for Minnesota and Ohio, broadly available college programs were eliminated in the states when the Incarcerated Youth Offender Grant program ended around 2010. The big question is whether any of the states’ programs, from CTE to the associate degree programs, are worth scaling up or replicating at other facilities and in other states.

Given this, we recommend that any investment in the region require programs to ensure alignment between facility- and community-based PSE programs through articulation and transfer agreements. Further, should the Great Lakes provide direct funding to scale up or replicate any publicly or privately funded programs, those programs should be expected to emphasize stackable credentials that can translate to college credits post-release. Also, we recommend exploring the applicability of Minnesota’s prison industry funding model used to support its associate degree program in other states in the region, which also have prison industry programs. Finally, as noted earlier, the Second Chance Pell Pilot program provides fertile ground for evaluating different instructional models, especially given the diversity among the study states’ eight pilots. For that reason, we recommend funding a study that examines how these models affect program implementation. Study findings would both help the five study states and other states participating with Pell Pilots or other PSE programs.

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