

THE LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON

2018 – 2019

GOLDMAN SCHOOL
OF
PUBLIC POLICY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY


THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
Prison Education Project


ALLIANCE
FOR HIGHER
EDUCATION
IN PRISON

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In this brief report, we provide a descriptive overview of the landscape of higher education in prison during the 2018-2019 academic year. Data for this report are drawn from two sources: responses to the *2020 Annual Survey of Higher Education in Prison Programs* (n = 131) and data compiled by the Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison for known programs that did not complete the *Annual Survey* (n = 169). (Additional information on these datasets is provided in Appendix A.)

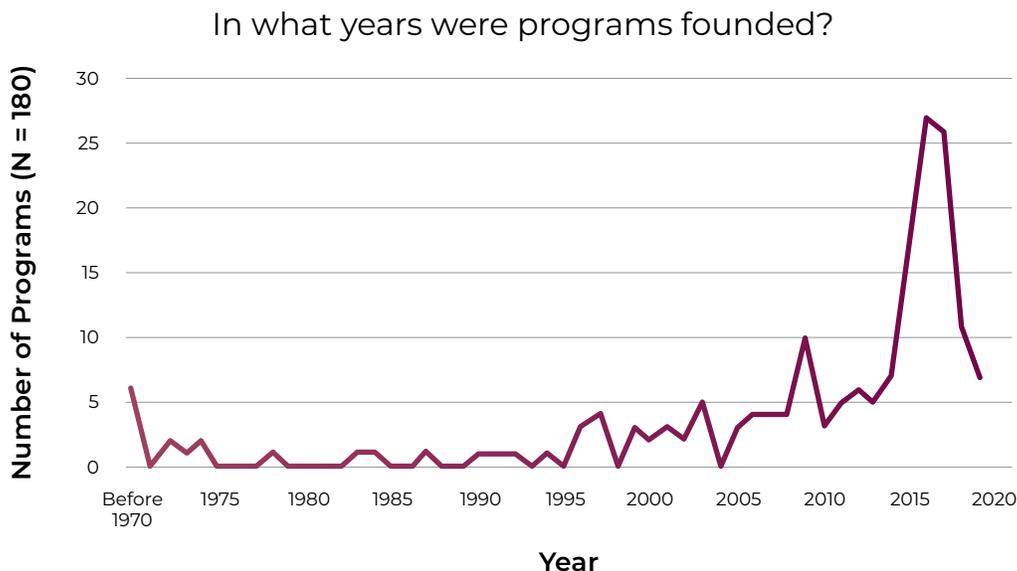
How Many Higher Education in Prison Programs Are Identified in Our Data?

We identified and were able to include 300 higher education in prison programs in our data for the 2018-2019 academic year. For our purposes, a higher education in prison program is defined as an organization that meets the following criteria:

- 1. provides postsecondary education;**
- 2. is formally affiliated with a college and/or university; and**
- 3. uses a secondary credential (e.g., a High School degree or GED) as a requirement for admission.**

How Long Have Programs Been Operating?

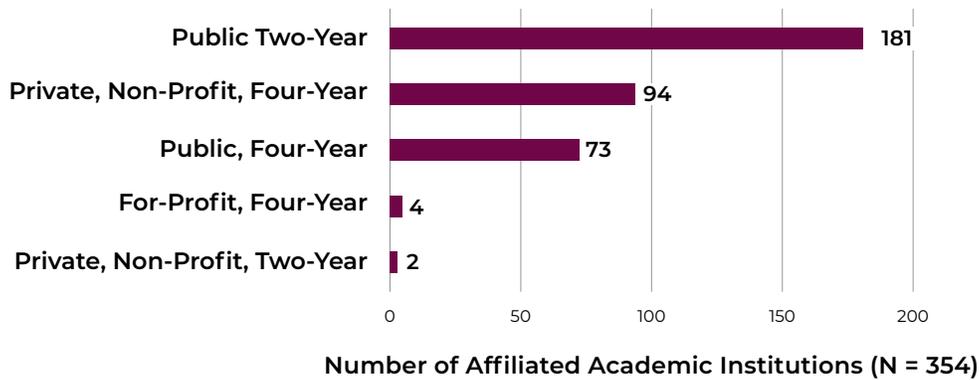
Although there is a great deal of variation in how long programs have been in existence, the past decade has seen a significant growth in the founding of higher education in prison programs. This growth may have been encouraged by the Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative, which supported the creation of 22 new programs in 2016.



What Types of Colleges and Universities Support Higher Education in Prison?

The academic institutions with which programs are affiliated varied, but consistent with previous years, the majority of institutions that provided higher education in prison are public, two-year schools.

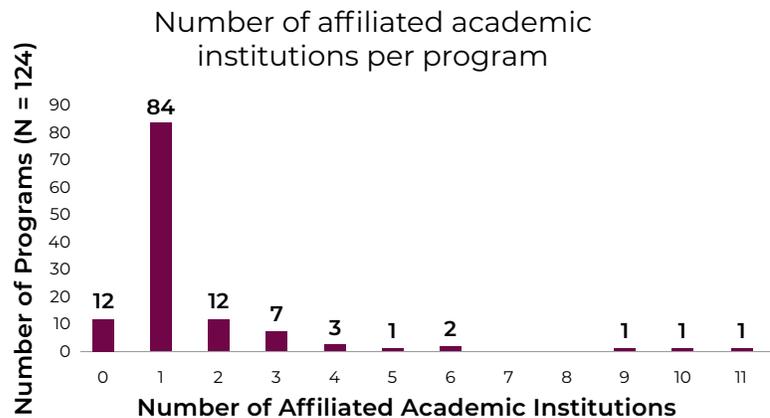
What types of academic institutions are affiliated with higher education in prison programs?



For the subset of prison higher education programs that completed the *2020 Annual Survey* (43.7% of programs in our population), we are able to report additional information on affiliated academic institutions:

AFFILIATED ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Among respondents to the survey, two-thirds of higher education in prison programs were affiliated with a single academic institution (67.7%). Three programs reported that they worked with more than nine colleges or universities. Some programs are partnerships between multiple colleges or universities, while other academic institutions work with a third-party facilitator to provide programming. Twelve survey respondents reported that their programs were not affiliated with any institutions of higher education.



Where Are Colleges and Universities that Provided Higher Education in Prison Located?

The distribution of programs varies across the United States. In some states, many community colleges offer coursework inside of prisons without independent prison education projects at those academic institutions. This method of providing prison education can lead to larger numbers of programs included in the database, compared to states where most higher education in prison programs are distinct entities from (or within) the academic institution. For example, North Carolina and California both have many community colleges that offer academic opportunities inside of prison, and these two states have the largest number of programs in the database, with 44 and 33 programs respectively.

There are three states for which we were not able to locate higher education in prison programs: Delaware, Kentucky, and Montana¹. (See Appendix B for a breakdown of programs by state.) Compared to other regions, there are more programs located in the South included in the database (35.3%) and the fewest programs in the Northeast (17.3%).

Region	Number of Programs (N = 300)
South	106
West	83
Midwest	59
Northeast	52

Where and How Was Higher Education Programming Offered?

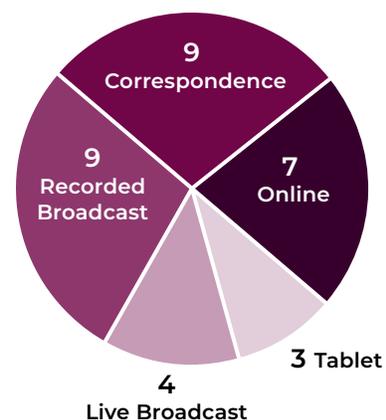
For the subset of prison higher education programs that completed the *2020 Annual Survey* (43.7% of programs in our population), we are able to report additional information on where and how programming was offered:

MODES OF ENGAGEMENT

Among programs responding to the survey, most offered only face-to-face, in-person instruction on-site (86.2%, n = 105, N = 122).² Two programs offered solely remote instruction and 15 programs offered both face-to-face and remote instruction. Remote instruction was provided in a variety of ways, with correspondence, online, and recorded transmission or broadcast instruction reportedly used the most frequently.

Responding programs offered remote instruction to varying numbers of facilities.³ Seven programs offered remote instruction to only one facility, while four programs offered remote programming to over 50 facilities (N = 17).

How do programs provide remote instruction? (N = 17)



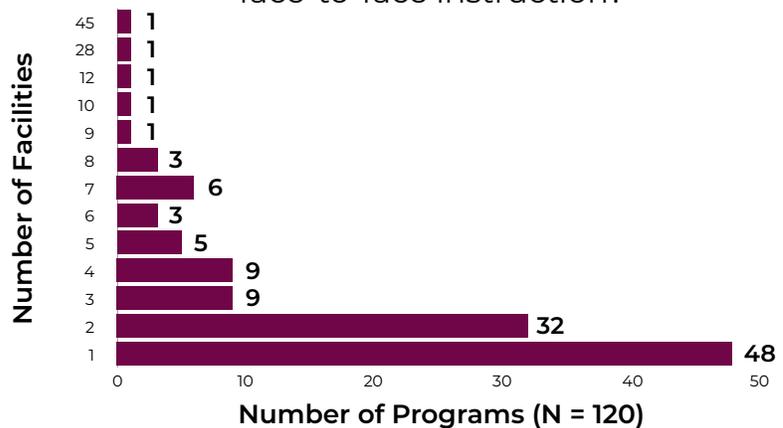
¹ In 2020/2021 higher education in prison programs launched in Delaware and Kentucky, making Montana the only state in the country where we are currently unable to identify a higher education in prison program.

² Due to variances in responses to the survey, not all questions had the same response size. This report uses the capital "N" to refer to the total number of responses to a particular question and the lowercase "n" to refer to the number of respondents who indicated a particular response to that question.

³ For the purposes of this report, facility includes prisons, jails, detention centers, juvenile facilities, and other institutions of confinement.

Responding programs that reported providing face-to-face, in-person instruction did so at an average of 3.2 facilities, with most programs working at only one or two facilities.⁴ Some facilities hosted courses from multiple higher education programs, and postsecondary programming was offered at a total of 263 facilities across responding programs (N=131).⁵

At how many facilities did programs provide face-to-face instruction?



FACILITY TYPE

The majority of responding programs offered coursework at male-designated facilities (93.2%, n = 110, N = 118)⁶. A total of 53 programs (44.9%) offered coursework at female-designated facilities, with eight programs (6.8%) operating solely at female-designated facilities. Most programs offered coursework to only adults, but nine programs (7.4%) also offered programming for juveniles (N = 121).

What Credential Pathways and Other Services did Programs Offer?

At least 121 programs in the database offered certificates. On average, programs with certificates offered 3.7 different certificate pathways, with 455 total certificate pathways offered.

At least 119 programs in the database offered degree pathways. On average, programs with degree pathways offered two degree options. Ninety-five programs offered Associate’s degrees, 39 programs offered Bachelor’s degrees, and 6 programs offered Master’s degrees. Across all programs, 232 degree pathways were offered: 173 Associate’s, 52 Bachelor’s, and 6 Master’s pathways.

Degree Pathway	Number of Programs
Associate of Applied Science	17
Associate of Applied Arts	3
Associate of Science	24
Associate of Arts	57
Associate in Science for Transfer	7
Associate in Art for Transfer	10
Associate in General Studies	13
Bachelor of Science	15
Bachelor of Arts	26
Bachelor of General Studies	0
Bachelor (other)	4
Masters (any)	6
Doctorate (any)	0

⁴The standard deviation was 5.0 facilities.

⁵ For the 282 programs in the full database for which facility information is available, postsecondary education is provided at 438 total facilities.

⁶ Because most U.S. prisons segregate people based on binary sex assigned at birth, the survey included ‘male’ and ‘female’ designated facilities. Nevertheless, many programs offer programming to trans*, transgender, gender non-conforming, and/or non-binary individuals.

For the subset of prison higher education programs that completed the *2020 Annual Survey* (43.7% of programs in our population), we are able to report additional information on programs and services offered:

Of programs responding to the survey, nearly all (93.6%) offered postsecondary, vocational, or CTE coursework for credit. About a third offered college preparatory coursework (31.2%) or postsecondary, vocational, or CTE not for credit (32.0%).

ACADEMIC COURSEWORK

Academic Programming Offered	Number of Programs	Percent of programs (N = 125)
High school coursework	5	4.0%
GED or Hi-Set	7	5.6%
Adult education	18	14.4%
College preparatory coursework	39	31.2%
Postsecondary, Vocational, or CTE: for-credit	117	93.6%
Postsecondary, Vocational, or CTE: not-for credit	40	31.0%

In addition to academic coursework, higher education in prison programs responding to the survey offered a variety of opportunities for continued program engagement. These included academic library access and computer labs, as well as extracurricular activities. Programs that marked “other” listed additional opportunities such as student newspapers, opportunities for research, letter-writing exchanges, tutoring, and mentorship or peer support.

Program or Service	Number of Programs (N = 125)
Academic library access	62
Teaching assistants	59
Study hall	54
Computer lab	48
Workshops	46
Writing lab	40
Extracurricular activities	36
Job or career readiness	36
Creative arts	35
Lecture series	34
Reading group or book club	24
Computer literacy	22
Learning disability support (and/or testing)	22
English Language Learning (ELL)	21

Digital literacy	18
Health or wellness support	16
Student advisory board	15
Health and wellness coursework	14
Inside-Out programming	10
Restorative justice services	9
Film series	8
Job placement	8
Student council or government	6
Competency-based/CLEP programming	3
Apprenticeships	2
Sentence-mandated coursework	1
Other	45

REENTRY SERVICES

Responding programs offered different types of reentry support services, with the most programs offering admissions counseling or support and pathways to a college or university campus. Programs that marked “other” listed additional services such as donating business suits to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated job-seekers, academic tutoring, and internships.

Reentry Service	Number of Programs	Percent of Responding Programs (N = 91)
Admission counseling/support	59	64.8%
Pathway to a college or university campus	56	61.5%
Referrals to a community-based reentry organizations	43	47.3%
Financial aid counseling	41	45.1%
Academic instruction (certificates or licensure)	34	37.4%
Scholarships and/or stipends	27	29.7%
Job placement or job readiness	21	23.1%
Transportation support or vouchers	19	20.9%
Basic needs supplies	17	18.7%
Financial literacy	16	17.6%
Career training	15	16.5%
Technology literacy	14	15.4%
Housing support services	12	13.2%
Family member support services	11	12.1%
GED/Hi-Set	5	5.5%

Sex- or gender-specific programming	5	5.5%
English Language Learning (ELL)	3	3.3%
Legal support services	3	3.3%
Other methods of reentry support	20	22.0%

CORRECTIONAL STAFF PROGRAMMING

Approximately a fifth of responding programs (n = 22, N = 112) reported offering programming or services specifically designed for correctional staff. The types of services offered to staff included scholarships, professional development courses, lecture series, and advising. Some programs set aside these services for staff only, while others extended scholarships and support services to the family members of staff as well. For example, one program provided scholarships for the children of officers to attend summer camp at the affiliated college. Most academic scholarships offered to staff are for traditional on-campus courses, but some programs offer correctional staff the opportunity to take courses at the facility, either alongside students who are currently incarcerated or in a separate class.

How do Programs Admit and Enroll Students?

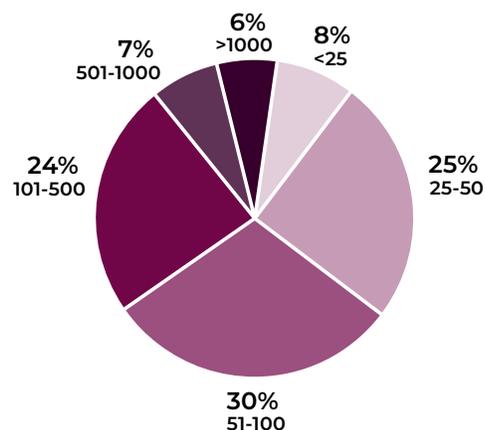
For the subset of prison higher education programs that completed the *2020 Annual Survey* (43.7% of programs in our population), we are able to report additional information on how programs admit and enroll students:

NUMBERS OF STUDENTS

Across 107 programs that responded to the survey question about student populations, respondents reported a total of 25,081 students enrolled in postsecondary education. Enrollment at specific programs ranged from 10 students to 3,016 students. For remote instruction, a median of 55 students were enrolled at each program (Average = 393.8, Range = 8 – 2280, N = 12). For in-person instruction, a median of 69 students were enrolled at each program (Average = 193.87, Range = 10 – 2500, N = 105).

An additional 976 non-incarcerated students were enrolled in coursework offered at prisons or jails, frequently through the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program or similar programming that brings students from an “outside” campus to the prison or jail to engage in coursework.

How many inside students who are currently incarcerated did programs enroll?



APPLICATION PROCESS

Application methods varied both among and within programs responding to the survey, specifically by facility and/or by credential (N = 118). Some programs used open enrollment (47.5%, n = 56), while others used competitive enrollment (43.2%, n = 51). For some programs, enrollment processes were conditional on regulations put forth by the Department of Corrections.

Enrollment methods also varied (N = 117). Some responding programs used a cohort model in which a group of students begin and move through the program at the same time (42.7%, n = 50), others use a staggered model of enrollment (36.8%, n = 43), and other programs employed both of these methods (33.3%, n = 39).

How Can I Add a Program to the Database?

When the National Directory of Higher Education in Prison Programs is launched in December 2020 you will be able to add a prison higher education program to the database, by visiting: <https://www.higheredinprison.org/national-directory>

What is the History of this Project?

In 2008, the Prison Studies Project at Harvard University began compiling a list of higher education in prison programs throughout the United States. For the next 10 years, the National Directory of Higher Education Programs in Prison remained a central focus of the Prison Studies Project and an important resource for the higher education in prison community. Today, working with our partners at the [Prison Studies Project](#) at Harvard University, the [Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison](#) at the University of Utah, and the [Goldman School of Public Policy](#) at the University of California, Berkeley, the Alliance for Higher Education will launch the National Directory of Higher Education in Prison Programs (2020), which will serve as a comprehensive resource for people seeking information about college in prison programs in the United States.

For additional information on the Higher Education in Prison Landscape Project, go to: <https://www.higheredinprison.org/higher-education-in-prison-landscape-project>

Appendix A: Data Sources

Data for this report are drawn from two sources: responses to the *2020 Annual Survey of Higher Education in Prison Programs* (n = 131) and program information retrieved from a dataset compiled by the Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison (Research Collaborative) for known programs that did not complete the *Annual Survey* (n = 169)

The *Annual Survey of Higher Education in Prison* was launched in March 2020. An invitation to take the survey was sent to the primary contact email address of all higher education in prison programs included in a database compiled by the Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison between 2015-2019 (N = 278) and also distributed as a link through a public listserv of higher education in prison stakeholders. The survey consisted of 77 questions, gathering descriptive program information for the 2018-2019 academic year (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019). Questions included where programming was offered and to whom, what certificate and degree pathways were offered, and what additional programming existed for incarcerated students

Some programs did not answer all survey questions, accounting for the varying range of sample sizes reported throughout this analysis. Some programs had multiple representatives who participated in the survey, and when that occurred, responses from different program affiliates were combined to create one entry for that program. Participants were entered into a drawing to receive one of five \$1,000 awards for participation.

Once survey collection was complete, data was retrieved for programs included in the Research Collaborative's database that did not respond to the *2020 Annual Survey*. These data were then compiled with the *2020 Annual Survey* data to create one database with information from all known programs. Information for the Research Collaborative's dataset were collected through extensive online research and communication with program administrators via email and phone during 2019. Researchers contacted program leaders to verify information and received responses from over half of program contacts during the data collection period. Through this process, the Research Collaborative collected information for 289 higher education in prison programs.

Appendix B. Number of Prison Higher Education Programs, by State

State	Number of Programs (N = 300)		
North Carolina	44	Oklahoma	3
California	33	Tennessee	3
Wisconsin	18	Arkansas	2
New York	16	Idaho	2
Texas	15	Kansas	2
Washington	10	Missouri	2
Arizona	9	Nebraska	2
Connecticut	9	South Carolina	2
Pennsylvania	9	Vermont	2
Illinois	8	Wyoming	2
Oregon	8	Alaska	1
Georgia	7	District of Columbia	1
Massachusetts	7	Indiana	1
Minnesota	7	Maine	1
Ohio	7	New Hampshire	1
Virginia	7	Rhode Island	1
New Jersey	6	South Dakota	1
Alabama	5	West Virginia	1
Florida	5	Delaware	0
Utah	5	Kentucky	0
Iowa	4	Montana	0
Louisiana	4		
Maryland	4		
Michigan	4		
New Mexico	4		
Colorado	3		
Hawaii	3		
Mississippi	3		
Nevada	3		
North Dakota	3		