THE LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON

2019–2020

GOLDMAN SCHOOL
OF
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THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
Prison Education Project

ALLIANCE
FOR HIGHER
EDUCATION
IN PRISON

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In this report, we provide a descriptive overview of the landscape of higher education in prison during the 2019-2020 academic year, prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (July 1, 2019 – March 1, 2020). To our knowledge, the data we present here is the best available information about the state of higher education in prison programming prior to the disruptive effect of the pandemic.

Data for this report are drawn from responses to the *2021 Annual Survey of Higher Education in Prison Programs* (n = 168), which were compiled with known program information from the *National Directory of Higher Education in Prison Programs* (n = 204). Additional information on the Annual Survey and National Directory are provided in Appendix A.

How Many Higher Education in Prison Programs Are Identified in the Data?
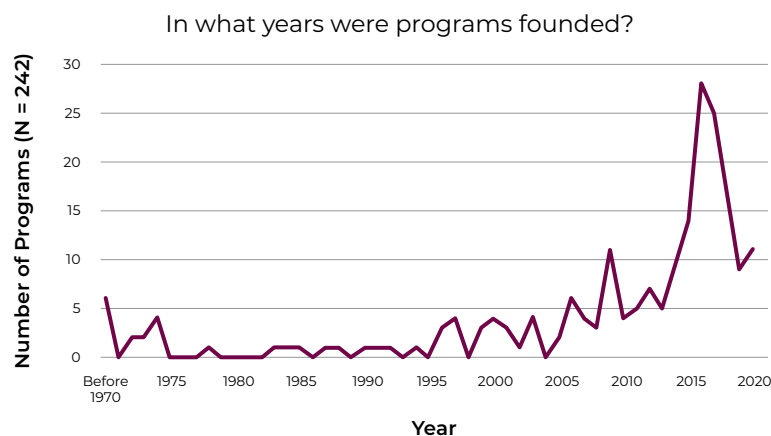
The data includes 372 higher education in prison programs for the 2019-2020 academic year. This is an increase from the previous year, wherein there were 302 known programs. The data reflects a 23.1% increase in the number of programs represented in the National Directory beween the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic year.

For the purposes of this project, 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.**

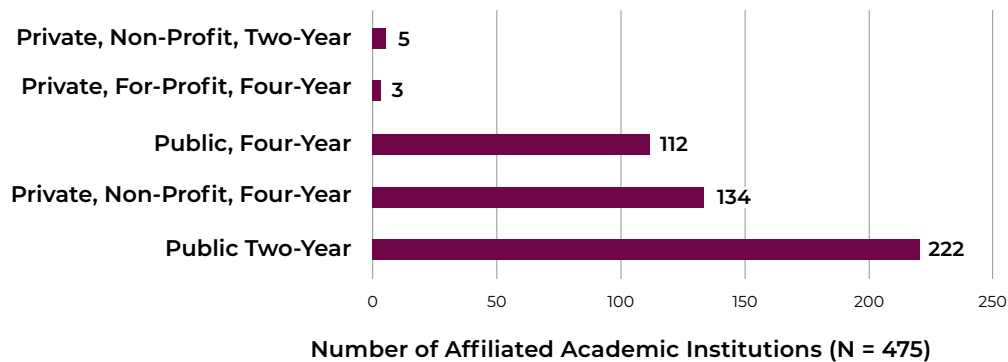## How Long Have Programs Been Operating?

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 includes new programs supported by the Second Chance Pell Experimental Site Program (22 new programs in 2016 and 40 new programs in 2020). This upturn in the number of programs at the beginning in 2014 and continuing through 2018 experiences a flattening in the 2019-2020 academic year, which could have been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In what years were programs founded?

What Types of Colleges and Universities are Affiliated with Higher Education in Prison Programs?
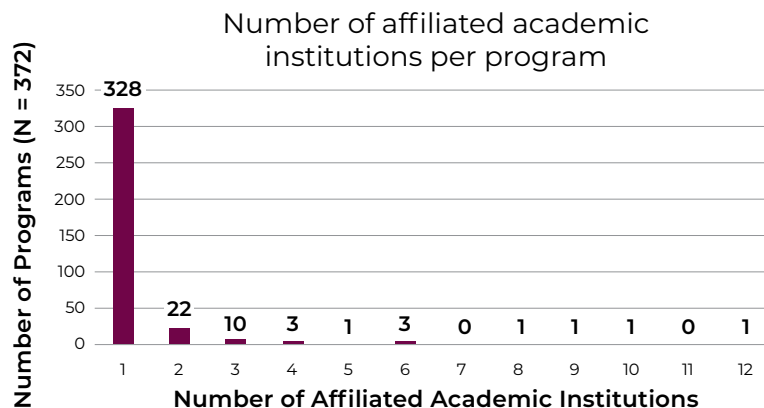
The academic institutions with which programs are affiliated vary, but consistent with data from the previous academic year (2018-2019), the majority of institutions (46.7%) that provide higher education in prison are public, two-year schools.

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

Institution Type	Number
Private, Non-Profit, Two-Year	5
Private, For-Profit, Four-Year	3
Public, Four-Year	112
Private, Non-Profit, Four-Year	134
Public Two-Year	222

Number of Affiliated Academic Institutions (N = 475)

AFFILIATED ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Some higher education in prison programs maintain partnerships among multiple colleges or universities, while other programs work with a third-party facilitator to provide programming and are not directly affiliated with an institution of higher education. For those higher education in prison programs that provided information about the number of affiliated academic institutions, the majority were affiliated with a single academic institution (N = 328, 87.7%). Three programs reported that they worked with more than nine colleges or universities.

Number of affiliated academic institutions per program

Number of Affiliated Academic Institutions	Number of Programs
1	328
2	22
3	10
4	3
5	1
6	3
7	0
8	1
9	1
10	1
11	0
12	1

Number of Programs (N = 372)

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 prisons without standalone 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 operate within) the academic institution. For example, North Carolina and California both have colleges and universities that offer academic opportunities inside prison, and these two states have the largest number of programs in the database, with 45 and 38 programs respectively. Montana is the only state for which a program did not respond to the survey, and therefore, we are not able to accurately account for a higher education program in the state. 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 (34.7%) and the fewest programs in the Northeast (18.8%).

Region	Number of Programs (N = 372)
South	129
West	91
Midwest	82
Northeast	70

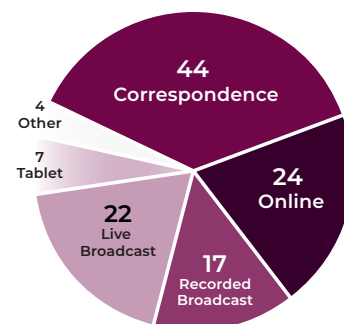## Where and How Was Higher Education Programming Offered?

We also collected information on where and how programming was offered, including modes of engagement and facility type.

MODES OF ENGAGEMENT

Among programs responding to the 2021 Annual Survey, most offered only face-to-face, in-person instruction on-site (64.0%, n = 129, N = 202).[1] Sixteen programs offered solely remote instruction, and 57 programs offered both face-to-face and remote instruction. The number of programs reporting remote instruction significantly increased between the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 acadmeic years, likely due to the emergence of the global pandemic and lockdowns across facilities.[2] 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] Twenty-six programs offered remote instruction to only one facility, while five programs offered remote programming to over 50 facilities (N = 59).

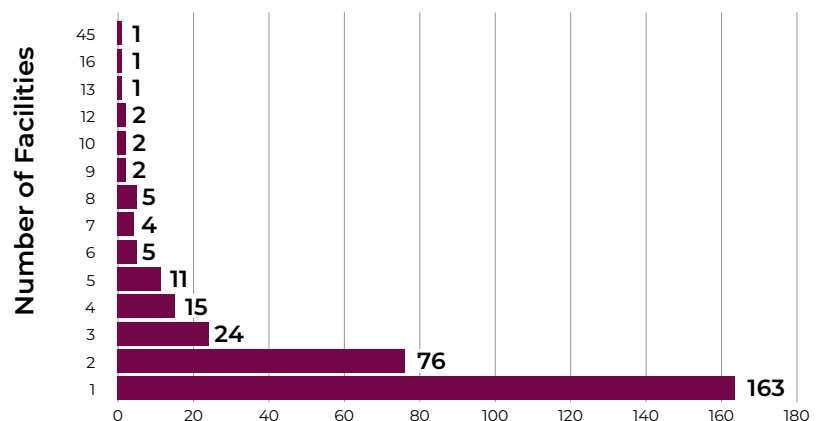How do programs provide remote instruction? (N = 72)

44 Correspondence
4 Other
7 Tablet
22 Live Broadcast
17 Recorded Broadcast
24 Online

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[1] 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 responeses to a particular question and the lowercase "n" to refer to the number of respondents who indicated a particular response to that question.

[2] Many more programs reported remote programming in response to the 2021 Survey than in the previous year. The 2021 Survey specified that the period of data collection was the 2019-2020 academic year, prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (July 1, 2019 – March 1, 2020). Nevertheless, it is likely that some participants reported changes to their program due to the lockdown of prisons that occurred in March 2020, forcing many programs to piviot to remote programming, which likely artificially inflated the number of remote programs reported.

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

Responding programs that reported providing face-to-face, in-person instruction did so at an average of 2.34 facilities, with most programs working at only one or two facilities. Some facilities hosted courses from multiple higher education programs, and postsecondary programming was offered at a total of 536 facilities across programs (N = 372).

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

Number of Facilities

Number of Facilities	Count
45	1
16	1
13	1
12	2
10	2
9	2
8	5
7	4
6	5
5	11
4	15
3	24
2	76
1	163

FACILITY TYPE

The majority of responding programs offered coursework at male-designated facilities (86.8%, n = 158, N = 182).[4] A total of 64 programs (35.3%) offered coursework at female-designated facilities. Most programs offered coursework to only adults, but 18 programs (10.0%) also offered programming for juveniles (N = 181).

What Credential Pathways and Other Opportunities did Programs Offer?

Among programs reponding to the survey, 153 programs offered certificates. On average, programs with certificates[5] offered 4.14 different certificate pathways, with 629 total certificate pathways offered across all programs.

Additionally, 147 programs in the database offered degree pathways. On average, programs with degree pathways offered 2.35 degree options. A total of 108 programs offered Associate's degrees, 44 programs offered Bachelor's degrees, and 8 programs offered Master's degrees. Across all programs, 244 degree pathways were offered: 196 Associate's, 63 Bachelor's, and eight Master's pathways. To date, there are no Doctorate degrees recorded in the National Directory.

Degree Pathway	Number of Programs
Associate of Applied Science	44
Associate of Applied Arts	9
Associate of Science	38
Associate of Arts	80
Associate in Science for Transfer	1
Associate in Art for Transfer	12
Associate in General Studies	15
Bachelor of Science	26
Bachelor of Arts	34
Bachelor of General Studies	2
Bachelor (other)	8
Masters (any)	8
Doctorate (any)	0

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[4] 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.

[5] The total number of certificates offered does not include Certificates of Completion.

ACADEMIC COURSEWORK

The majority of responding programs (76.4%) offered postsecondary, vocational, or career and technical (CTE) coursework for credit. About one-fourth offered college preparatory coursework (25.5%) or postsecondary, vocational, or CTE not for credit (28.5%).

Academic Programming Offered	Number of Programs	Percent of programs (N = 165)
High school coursework	5	3.0%
GED or Hi-Set	18	10.9%
Adult education	19	11.5%
College preparatory coursework	42	25.5%
Postsecondary, Vocational, or CTE: not-for-credit	47	28.5%
Postsecondary, Vocational, or CTE: for credit	126	76.4%

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, computer labs, as well as extracurricular activities. Some programs also listed additional opportunities not included below, such as honors societies, parole preparation, degree planning, podcast production, student newspapers, and Veterans support services.

Program or Service	Number of Programs (N = 165)
Academic library access	57
Study hall	53
Computer lab	51
Teaching assistants	50
Extracurricular activities	35
Computer literacy	34
Job or career readiness	34
Lecture series	34
Reading group or book club	34
Writing lab	32
English Language Learning (ELL)	30
Creative arts	27
Health or wellness support	26
Learning disability support (and/or testing)	24
Inside-Out programming	23
Student advisory board	23
Workshops	23

Digital literacy	20
Health and wellness coursework	17
Job placement	16
Restorative justice services	13
Film series	11
Apprenticeships	7
Student council or government	7
Competency-based/CLEP programming	3
Sentence-mandated coursework	2

REENTRY SERVICES

Responding programs reported offering a variety 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 academic tutoring, student clubs and organizations, and emergency funds.

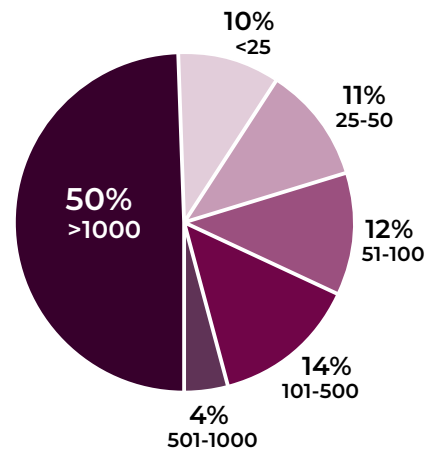| Reentry Service	Number of Programs	Percent of Responding Programs (N = 134)
Admission counseling/support	71	53.0%
Academic instruction (certificates or licensure)	68	50.7%
Pathway to a college or university campus	64	47.8%
Financial aid counseling	53	39.6%
Referrals to a community-based reentry organizations	52	38.8%
Scholarships and/or stipends	41	30.6%
Job placement or job readiness	36	26.9%
Career training	30	22.4%
Financial literacy	24	17.9%
Technology literacy	24	17.9%
Housing support services	21	15.7%
Basic needs supplies	20	14.9%
Family member support services	19	14.2%
GED/Hi-Set	17	12.7%
Transportation support or vouchers	15	11.2%
English Language Learning (ELL)	10	7.5%
Legal support services	8	6.0%
Sex- or gender-specific programming	8	6.0%
Other methods of reentry support	22	16.4%

How Many Students are Enrolled by Programs?

Across 161 programs respondents reported a total of 33,717 incarcerated students enrolled in postsecondary education. Enrollment at specific programs ranged from 2 student to 2,280 students. For remote instruction, a median of 40 students were enrolled at each program (Average = 195.9, Range = 2 – 2280, N = 37). For in-person instruction, a median of 68 students were enrolled at each program (Average = 168.6, Range = 8 – 2500, N = 157).

An additional 4,136 non-incarcerated students were enrolled in coursework offered at prisons or jails, frequently through inside-out type courses or similar programming that brings students from an "outside" campus to the prison or jail to engage in coursework

How many students who are currently incarcerated did programs enroll? (N=170)

- 10% <25
- 11% 25-50
- 12% 51-100
- 14% 101-500
- 4% 501-1000
- 50% >1000

CORRECTIONAL STAFF PROGRAMMING

Approximately one sixth of responding programs (n =31, N = 183) reported offering postsecondary 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 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 Can I Add a Program to the Database?

To see if your prison higher education program is currently included in the database, go to:
https://www.higheredinprison.org/national-directory

To add or update a prison higher education program in the database, go to:
https://www.higheredinprison.org/national-directory/suggest-an-update

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 maintains the National Directory of Higher Education in Prison Programs (2020), which serves as a comprehensive and up-to-date source 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

The *Annual Survey of Higher Education in Prison* was first launched in March 2020 and was used to create the *National Directory of Higher Education in Prison Programs*. The second Annual Survey was launched in March 2021 to update the directory and collect information about changes in the field.

In April 2021, an invitation to take the survey was sent to the primary contact email address of all higher education in prison programs that participated in the *2020 Annual Survey* and to all programs included in the *National Directory*. The survey was also distributed as a link through a mailing list maintained by the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison and through social media and other communication outlets. The survey consisted of 92 questions, gathering descriptive program information for the 2019-2020 academic year prior to the COVID-19 crisis (July 1, 2019 – March 1, 2020). Questions included where programming was offered and to whom, what certificate and degree pathways were offered, and what additional programming existed for incarcerated students. The *2021 Annual Survey* remained open through May 2021.

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 incentives for participation.

Once the survey was completed, additional existing data were retrieved for programs included in the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison's *National Directory* but that did not respond to the *2021 Annual Survey*. These data were used to update the *National Directory* with the most recent known program information.

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

State	Number of Programs (N = 372)[5]
North Carolina	45
California	38
New York	26
Wisconsin	19
Pennsylvania	17
Texas	16
Illinois	13
Connecticut	11
Michigan	11
Arizona	10
Washington	10
Virginia	8
Florida	8
Georgia	8
Massachusetts	8
Ohio	8
Oregon	8
Colorado	8
Minnesota	7
Alabama	6
Kansas	6
Maryland	6
Mississippi	6
New Jersey	6
Tennessee	6
Louisiana	5
Oklahoma	5
Utah	5
Hawaii	4
Indiana	4

State	Number of Programs
Iowa	4
Missouri	4
New Mexico	4
South Carolina	4
Nevada	3
North Dakota	3
Rhode Island	3
Vermont	3
Arkansas	2
Delaware	2
Idaho	2
Maine	2
Nebraska	2
New Hampshire	2
West Virginia	2
Wyoming	2
Alaska	1
Kentucky	1
South Dakota	1
District of Columbia	1
Montana	0

[5] Higher Education in Prison Program providing progamming in more than one state are represented in the chart multiple times, causing the total number of programs per state to be higher than the number of individual programs.