



The Amplifier

Plug into news that informs and encourages

July 2016

Higher Education Update from Rebecca Ginsburg

The landscape of higher education in Illinois' prisons is rapidly changing.

At this time last year, there were five institutions offering higher ed programming in the state: Lake Land, Kaskaskia, MacMurray, and Danville Community Colleges and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In the coming months there are likely to be significant changes.

Here's what's happened. Because of the lack of a state budget, the community colleges have not been paid per their contracts. It gets a little complicated here, because there are two different funding mechanisms at play. Colleges receive funds from IDOC for their vocational programs, but are compensated by the Illinois Community College Board for their academic programs. It pays more to offer vocational programming, which is one reason there has been more of that across our state. But colleges are likely to tell you that neither one of these programs is a significant money-maker; they more or less break even.

Two community colleges, Kaskaskia and MacMurray, have already stopped providing any sort of education at their sites. They could not afford to continue offering programs without being compensated.

I attended a meeting in Chicago last month with Lake Land College. At that time, staff announced that they would make a decision about their prison programming by October of this year. Lake Land is by far the largest provider of higher ed in prisons in Illinois, serving almost 10,000 students annually. In May 2016 they were owed around \$8 million by the state. They simply can't afford to continue to provide services without being paid. If they pull out, they will stop offering both vocational and academic programs at 16 prisons across the state.

What about DACC? The current president, Alice Marie Jacobs, has a strong commitment to offering academic and vocational programs at DCC. However, even its future is uncertain. Ms. Jacobs is retiring, her successor has not yet been named, and DACC, too, is facing budgetary challenges given the reduction in state support this year and the uncertainty of next year. I realize there have been many and various rumors about DACC's future making their way around the facility. Please apply a critical lens to what you hear. Rumors always abound at times of uncertainty and change.

What about the U of I? We're in the fortunate situation of not being under contract with either IDOC or the IL Community College Board. The cessation of state dollars coming through to support prison education hasn't affected us, since we'd never received that support in the first place. Where do we get our funds? Three sources: individual donations (including some generous donations from EJP students and their families), grants from public and private sources, and the U of I itself. You've probably heard me say that EJP is not on anyone's budget. That means that no entity provides us funding on a stable, consistent basis. That's a challenge for us. Year in and year out, we can't count on any funds. Literally. We have to raise our money as we go and, frankly, that produces some anxiety for me, as EJP's fundraiser.

But what a blessing it's been in the past year! Unlike the community college programs, which relied completely upon the state to keep going, EJP has no funding stream that can be interrupted. We're in the same position we've always been in. Poor as always, but left standing.

Well, except for one minor detail . . . we do receive a good portion of our support from the U of I. That's not stable support. It's something I have to negotiate (read: beg for) with various units on campus. Now, the U of I has not been affected as much as the community colleges by the budget climate, primarily because we're a big institution with millions of dollars in cash reserves. We receive around \$250 million annually from the state, but because of our large cash reserves, we've been able to manage without those funds this year. However, that doesn't mean that there isn't considerable anxiety on campus about next year, and the year after that. It seems certain that once the budget is resolved, we're going to receive less support from the state than we're accustomed to. What isn't clear yet is how that will translate into units' willingness to provide some support to EJP. It will be more difficult, though not impossible, to move forward without contributions from our own university.

In our favor: our program is popular and well-respected on campus and in the local community; the program is inexpensive to run (less than \$150,000 each year); and we've got friends in the local media and at the White House. Most valuable of all, we are determined.

Can Pell Grants save the day? Likely not. The U of I didn't apply for the pilot program because only degree-granting programs are eligible. Three other Illinois institutions did apply: Roosevelt University, North Park University, and the Danville Area Community College. It's not clear what they will decide to do if they receive those funds. Pell Grants alone cannot support a program.

What you can be sure of is my personal commitment to finding a path forward, and that I'm working with others who are also true to the EJP spirit of never missing an opportunity to take advantage of a good crisis.

—Rebecca Ginsburg

Eddie's Enigmas — SELECT SIX

ALMOST, BIOPSY, CHIMPS, CHINOS, CHINTZ, & DEHORT:
Besides having six different letters, what else do these words have in common?

Rating = ①

—Edward Viens

!!!Answer IDOC Director Baldwin's convocation "ask," and send your ideas and suggestions for Illinois justice reforms to:




Illinois Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentence Reform
Attn: Roger Heaton, Commission Chair
301 S. 2nd Street
Springfield, IL 62706

Make sure to request that every commissioner gets a copy of your document.

Additional addresses related to legislative reform and the new "life skills" prison can be found in the computer lab public documents file labeled "Contact Information for State Officials."

Updates to EJP calendar
may be found in the EJP
public documents July cal-
endar!

JULY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				9a CAVE 9a Newsletter Meeting 5p For-credit courses: Aero 353 1
	11:30a SRR 5p Computer Lab 5p Language Partners 5	5p Reading Groups: <u><i>The Road to Reality</i></u> <u><i>Science Literacy</i></u> <u><i>Books that Change</i></u> 6	5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness 7	9a CAVE 9a Newsletter Meeting 5p For-credit courses: Aero 353 8
5p WRC 11	11:30a SRR 5p Computer Lab 5p Language Partners 6p Academic Advising 12	5p Reading Groups: <u><i>Science Literacy</i></u> <u><i>Books that Change</i></u> 13	11:30a Reading Groups: <u><i>Didactics of Liberation</i></u> <u><i>"Generosity"</i></u> 5p Language Partners 5p Mindfulness 14	9a CAVE 9a Newsletter Meeting 5p For-credit courses: Aero 353 15
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The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.
Herbert Spencer (1820 - 1903)

SELECT SIX
HINT
"It's as easy
as A, B, C!"