



From left, EJP members distribute copies of EJP's statewide reentry guide and other materials; alumnus Johnny Page on graduation day; State Representative Carol Ammons addresses EJP students at Danville prison.



University of Illinois President Tim Killeen, with EJP students Cragg Hardaway and Christopher Shea. President Killeen attended the May 2016 Awards Convocation at Danville Correctional Center, where he told the EJP students, "You are University of Illinois students."

EJP News

Two of the four Illinois community colleges that have been offering postsecondary programs in our state's prisons for decades have suspended operations because of Illinois' budget crisis. We couldn't bear knowing that, 45 minutes west of campus, women at Decatur Correctional Center had no opportunity to study past the high school level. We put together a modest selection of not-for-credit reading groups and workshops at that prison this fall, and will continue to offer them programs until the outcome of the budget situation is clearer.

We're also organizing Astronomy lectures next year at prisons across Illinois, in honor of the once-in-a-lifetime total eclipse of the sun that will happen on August 21, 2017. Thank you to members of UIUC's Astronomy Department for making these lectures possible!

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In May 2016, EJP received the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Public Engagement, recognizing 8 years of offering excellent academic programs to individuals at Danville Correctional Center and our work with families in Chicago and Champaign.

**EJP is the recipient of the
2016 Chancellor's Award
for Excellence in
Public Engagement!**

This month we release the second edition of our statewide reentry guide, *Mapping Your Future*, an initiative launched by EJP alumni. The Illinois Department of Corrections has requested that we provide a copy to everyone leaving prison. That would require around 25,000 copies a year, and we are

striving towards that goal.

EJP alumnus Johnny Page received his Bachelor's Degree from Governors State University in May. Two more alumni are expected to graduate in December 2016. All have plans to attend graduate school.

EJP is behind efforts to create a stronger community of college-in-prison programs in Illinois. With better communication between us and with support from the Illinois Department of Corrections, we'll be better able to serve students—for example, by making transfer between facilities less disruptive to their studies.

Your support makes it all possible. Over one-quarter of our income this year needs to come from individuals like you. No donation is too small. Thank you for helping us make a difference.

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What Does a Trump Administration Mean for Higher Education in Prison?

BY REBECCA GINSBURG, EJP DIRECTOR

It's too early to know what a Trump presidency means for higher education in prison efforts, but it's essential to start asking.

First, it's significant that most people in the United States are incarcerated in state prisons, not federal facilities, and that the majority of prison education programs are hosted within those state institutions. That means that the health of the work will continue to depend on the climate within each of the 50 states.

Within Illinois, there's reason to be hopeful. The governor continues to support decarceration and the director of the Illinois Department of Corrections, John Baldwin, is openly enthusiastic about working with our state's universities and colleges. The state budget impasse notwithstanding, Illinois appears poised to continue to advance and expand its higher education programs. EJP will continue to work hard to

support those efforts, as well as to continue to build our own initiatives in Danville Correctional Center and beyond (see p. 4).

Still, the larger national context is important. Washington sets the tone and makes resources available that can support state higher education in prison programs across the country. For instance, EJP wouldn't have a computer lab without the generous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Further, the lives and wellbeing of our students upon release from prison depends to some degree on national policies that facilitate reentry. What can we expect of a Trump administration?

Trump has threatened to overturn Obama's executive orders. One, issued in November 2015, forbids federal agencies from asking applicants about their criminal histories on job applications. In other words, Obama "banned the box." Research

demonstrates that eliminating the box leads to hiring more individuals with records.

In the same month, the White House launched the Fair Chance Business Pledge, inviting companies to demonstrate their commitment to eliminating barriers to reentry. The Pledge encourages businesses to remove the box, train human resources staff on how to make fair decisions regarding individuals who have criminal records, and offer support to local reentry initiatives. Over 100 businesses have signed the pledge, including American Airlines, Facebook, Microsoft, and Xerox.

The administration introduced the Fair Chance Education Pledge in 2016. It encourages universities and colleges to enact policies that support systems-involved individuals' efforts to access higher education. Possible actions include hosting college-in-prison programs and reducing

barriers that systems-involved individuals face to college admission. Over 172 individual campuses have signed.

Earlier this year, Obama's Justice Department announced that it would no longer contract with private prisons. Trump is on record supporting greater use of private prisons. Private prisons offer fewer programs than their public counterparts, including educational programs. If there are significant transfers of prison populations to private facilities, we can expect to see decreased access across the country to higher education in prison.

Finally, a new pilot project makes Pell grants available to incarcerated students in state and federal prisons across the country. Over 12,000 incarcerated students will have access to college-in-prison programs by next summer, provided the initiative, supported by the Department of Education, isn't halted. Since the election, there has been much scrambling among the affected programs to learn whether it's protected. As of this writing, it's not clear. (EJP is not a Pell site.) Trump's expressed wish to eliminate the Department of Education itself makes folks especially uneasy. The thought of having to inform the prospective students that the initiative will not go forward is heartbreaking.

Aside from the vulnerability of specific policies and initiatives related to systems-involved individuals and higher education, there are other dangers. The pendulum has swung mightily in recent years, bringing us closer to a "rehabilitative" orientation towards incarceration. While there are problem with the rehabilitative paradigm—namely, it attributes crime to individuals' poor choices

instead of seeking deeper, more systemic causes—it is at least more humane than a punitive orientation, towards which we may be returning. Trump's clear support for the death penalty, his statement that the only problem with lethal injection is that it's too comfortable, and his tough on crime rhetoric all suggest as much.

The bully pulpit from which Obama sought to emphasize the humanity of incarcerated individuals and support their fuller inclusion in our society will likely disappear.

Where does hope lie? We can place some hope in Trump's mercurial politics, and we can trust in ourselves.

It is possible that once Trump becomes more knowledgeable about the bipartisan effort to promote criminal justice reform, he will find it advantageous to throw his support behind efforts like higher education within prisons. In the long run, college-in-prison can reduce federal and state spending on prisons and shore up the communities from which incarcerated individuals come. It is possible that Trump will recognize and value that.

Whether he does or not, we'll move forward. A Trump presidency bodes ill on many counts, but it does not foretell the ruination of efforts to expand access to higher education for all people, including those behind bars. If D.C. ceases to offer strategic support and encouragement in this area, we will rely upon continued innovation within the states. The new national consortium, the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison, will have its work cut out for it when it launches in early 2017. Fortunately, its members—including formerly incarcerated students—have experience and savvy. We can



Clockwise from top left. EJP students Orlando Mayorga, Cragg Hardaway, and Joseph Mapp congratulate one another on receiving EJP's Arturo Martinez Research Award, for their written testimony to the Illinois Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform. Raphael Jackson addresses the 2016 awards convocation; Dean Mary Kalantzis is recognized by EJP student Christopher Shea and thanked for her support of EJP; IL Department of Corrections director John Baldwin attended the convocation and encouraged EJP students to contribute to policy discussions.

sustain the momentum that higher ed in prison has seen in recent years.

Is it likely that some programs will close? Yes. Those new programs that planned to rely heavily on Pell dollars may not have an alternate path to sustainability (though one hopes that host institutions will step in with fundraising efforts to keep them running).

As I write this, less than a week after the election, there is still much anxiety and many unknowns. There are, frankly, matters much more pressing than preserving higher education in prison, such as capital punishment and immigrant detainment and deportation.

As the fronts of struggle become clearer, the Education Justice Project will do what we can, especially when it comes to public education and critical awareness of matters related to criminal justice and incarceration.

We will also continue, with renewed urgency, to strengthen connections between Illinois' college-in-prison programs, and between programs and the Department of Corrections. That will best ensure the health of higher ed in prison in our state, and put us in a position to offer support to other states.

The presidential candidates may have had different perspectives on criminal

justice reform and, possibly, prison education, but people from all political persuasions know what it is like to end up in prison and to love someone who is behind bars. We will spread our tent as wide as we possibly can, and continue to demonstrate our values—including inclusivity, compassion, critical approach, gentleness, and social justice. We will strategize and organize.

And we will be fierce advocates for incarcerated students, their families, their communities, and for policies that support their wellbeing, and that of the wider society. Thank you for helping us to be part of the solution.

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ejp mission

The mission of the Education Justice project is to create a model college-in-prison program that demonstrates the positive impacts of higher education upon incarcerated people, their families, the neighborhoods from which they come, the host institution, and society as a whole.