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Resources @ EJP

Prison-to-Gown Reading List

This is a sampling of academic studies and research articles about colleges and universities providing higher education for formerly incarcerated individuals and the range of considerations this work entails.

1. Alexander, Breanna. **“From Incarceration to College Graduation: How Colleges Can Support the Education Goals of Formerly Incarcerated Students.”** Education Insights Center, accessed March 16, 2023, <https://edinsightscenter.org/from-incarceration-to-college-graduation-how-colleges-can-support-the-education-goals-of-formerly-incarcerated-students/>.

This article provides information about the state of California’s broad-based and sustained program for higher education for incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals.

2. Copenhaver, Anna, Tina L. Edwards-Willey, and Bryan D. Byers. **“Journeys in Social Stigma: The Lives of Formerly Incarcerated Felons in Higher Education.”** Journal of Correctional Education 58, No. 3 (September 2007): 268-283, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23282578>.

The authors found that the support college campuses provide to formerly incarcerated individuals has a strong impact on their academic success.

3. Corrections to College California. **“Toolkit: Fostering Success for Formerly Incarcerated Students on Campus.”** Stanford Law School/Stanford Criminal Justice Center, 2017: 1-11.

California’s Corrections to College program has created a toolkit that provides a host of considerations when starting a program to support formerly incarcerated individuals on college campuses.

4. Custer, Bradley D. **“College Admission Policies for Ex-Offender Students: A Literature Review.”** Journal of Correctional Education 67, No. 2 (September 2016): 35-43, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26506635>.

The author found no evidence that background checks lower violent crime on college campuses. He also found that the practice, which has limited legal support backing it, deterred people who have convictions from applying.

5. Hughes, Stephanie, Teressa L. Elliott, and Margaret Myers. **“Measuring the Impact of Student Background Checks on Reducing Crime in Higher Education.”** Public Administration Research 3, No. 2 (October 2014): 121-133, <https://doi.org/10.5539/par.v3n2p121>.

This preliminary study shows that including background checks in higher education application processes does not have an impact on campus crime rates.

6. McTier, Terrence S., Jr., Stephen Santa-Ramirez, and Keon M McGuire. **“A Prison to School Pipeline: College Students with Criminal Records and Their Transitions into Higher Education.”** Journal of Underrepresented & Minority Progress 1, No. 1 (December 2017): 8 - 22, <https://doi.org/10.32674/jump.v1i1.33>.

After tracking four students who had been system-involved, the authors found that this demographic needs networks of support, tailored resources, and academic assistance.

7. Runell, Lindsey Livingston. **“Identifying Desistance Pathways in a Higher Education Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals.”** International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology 61, Issue 8 (October 2015): 894-918, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X15608374>.

Involvement in higher education for formerly incarcerated individuals can act as a “hook for change” as well as an increase in personal agency.

8. Scott, DeWitt. **“Developing the Prison-to-School Pipeline: A Paradigmatic Shift in Educational Possibilities During an Age of Mass Incarceration.”** Journal of Correctional Education 68, No. 3 (December 2017): 41-52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26508032>.

This author argues that the prison-to-school pipeline reduces recidivism and eases re-entry for those impacted by the carceral system.*

9. Silbert, Rebecca, Corrections to College California and Debbie Mukamal, Stanford Criminal Justice Center. **“Striving for Success: The Academic Achievements of Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Students in California Community Colleges.”** Stanford Law School/Stanford Criminal Justice Center, (January 2020): 1-35.

Many higher education programs for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students emphasize the outcomes of increased public safety and reduced recidivism. This report provides information about the other positive outcomes associated with higher education, including critical thinking skills, the development of social capital, and the creation of new career pathways.*

10. Sokoloff, Natalie J. and Anika Schenck-Fontaine. **“College programs in prison and upon reentry for men and women: a literature review.”** Contemporary Justice Review 1, Vol. 20 (December 2016): 95-114, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2016.1262772>.

In addition to greatly reduced recidivism, participants in college programs are more likely to be employed upon release. However, incarceration itself creates significant challenges in accessing higher education once individuals have reentered the community.*

*Several of the studies included in this list use recidivism rates as a measure of an initiative or program’s success or failure. While we at EJP recognize the validity of these studies and the convenience of recidivism as a metric, we reject it as a measure of success for formerly incarcerated people. Learn more about how we measure success in this brief document.