



EJP HANDBOOK

(2023–2024)



The mission of the Education Justice Project is to build 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.

This year's handbook contains a revision in structure with an eye toward simplicity: The way you engage with EJP will determine what information from this handbook is most pertinent for you to read. The first part of the handbook is for everyone, and then the middle section is divided into four main categories of ways people get involved with EJP:

- On-site programs (i.e. our programs at Danville Correctional Center)
- Off-site programs (i.e. EJP programs away from the prison)
- EJP interns
- Technical staff and support (those who work at the U of I campus as well as remotely around the world)

Of course, we hope everyone reads the handbook in its entirety! We view this document as a guide to the wide-ranging project that is EJP. We believe the whole organization will run more smoothly, coherently, and intelligently if each member understands how we function, the policies that govern our work, the governance structure through which we operate, and the values that sustain us. When each member has a clear view of the whole EJP universe, they are better equipped to make meaningful contributions within it.

This handbook is updated each year. Some sections are taken from documents written by EJP coordinators. Other sections were written by EJP Director Rebecca Ginsburg and EJP's former writer-editor Natalie Mesnard, and revised over the years. Certain portions are constantly being updated, such as the Strategic Objectives and current programs. Revisions to this year's handbook were made by Mollie Hosmer-Dillard and Brian Dolinar, 2023 EJP writers. The handbook was designed by Jamarri Nix.

Please feel free to offer your revisions and suggestions for future handbooks.
Thank you for reading this book and for being part of EJP.

August 2023

Quick Guide to Connecting with EJP

Calendar

Our [online calendar](#) lists upcoming EJP events, both online and in person.

EJP Digital Newsletter

EJP This Week is our digital newsletter. It comes out every Monday and includes announcements of upcoming EJP events and activities at Danville prison, on the Urbana-Champaign campus, and in the community. This is a good way of staying in touch with EJP happenings. Sign up for the newsletter [here](#).

EJP Member Announcements

These also come out every Monday and are geared towards the particular interests and concerns of active EJP members. You can access announcements via a link on **EJP This Week**.

EJP Lunches

EJP Lunches take place once a month. You can join us via Zoom or in person to meet other EJP members, learn about upcoming initiatives, and find out how you might get involved with EJP, if you're not already. Find out about lunches by signing up for our digital newsletter (see above).

Mango

Mango is an online platform where EJP communication takes place (in addition to email). It's also a place to share content, updates, and store EJP files. To sign up to join Mango, contact Sarah Unruh at sarahu2@illinois.edu.

Social Media

Follow EJP on social media!

Facebook: @educationjustice

EJP Forum on Incarceration and Higher Education:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/487707641260257>

Instagram: @ejp_at_il

Website: educationjustice.net

Contents

I. What is the Education Justice Project (EJP)?

Introduction	6
EJP History	9
What's New with EJP	11
Strategic Objectives 2022-25	12
EJP Values	14
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	15
Programs and Initiatives 2023–24	17

II. How Does EJP Operate?

Governance	22
Key People 2023–24	26
Finances	28
Culture & Climate	29
Organizational Chart	30

III. How Can You Get Involved?

A. On-Site Programs	32
B. Off-Site Programs	38
C. Writing and Research	42
Policy	43
D. Internship Program	44
E. Technical and Support Staff	45

IV. What Else You Need to Know

Growing within EJP	48
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V. Appendices

EJP Group Commitments	52
EJP Policies	53
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives	63



What is the
Education Justice
Project (EJP)?

Introduction

The Education Justice Project (EJP) is a comprehensive college-in-prison program. It is currently a unit of the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

EJP's activities are vast and ambitious. Through EJP, the University of Illinois offers for-credit courses at a medium-security men's prison, Danville Correctional Center, for which students earn U of I credit. EJP's extracurricular activities at the prison—several of which were initiated by EJP students—support students in their academic work and provide leadership opportunities. These include writing workshops, guest lectures, student advising, and an anti-violence group.

Our educational programs at the prison are complemented by our Reentry Guide Initiative, which started in 2015 at the urging of EJP alumni. RGI's mission is to provide support and tools for self-empowerment to people reentering society after incarceration.

RGI produces three reentry guides—one for people being released to Illinois, a national reentry guide, and a guide for individuals being deported to Mexico or Central America upon release. It also creates reentry videos, provides technical assistance to reentry organizations in other states, and seeks to educate around the need for policy change in Illinois.

In the fall of 2022, we launched a research and exploratory phase of our Prison-to-Gown Pathway initiative. The goal of this program is to provide support and services to students on campus who have interacted with the criminal justice system. The approach is an innovative,

responsive strategy based on learning best practices from other university campuses with similar programs, while also actively soliciting feedback from people with first-hand experience.

Finally, we are building out our research and policy components, as directed by our 2022–25 Strategic Objectives. This part of EJP's work includes our research group, fact sheets, and our engagement with the Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison and the Freedom to Learn Campaign. To align these efforts, we hired our first full-time director of policy and research in February 2022.

We aspire to align our activities and policies with our vision of a more just and humane world, sustained through education and critical awareness. Our diversity, equity, and inclusion activities direct us to consider how we enact our values in the world and within EJP.

Since our founding in 2008, EJP has had hundreds of members. They include incarcerated students, released students (alumni), program coordinators, course instructors, advisory council members, interns, graphic designers, and more.

When we speak of “EJP” we refer to this universe, while keeping in mind that many members' experience of EJP is of working closely with a small number of people within a particular EJP program.

This handbook is meant to help active EJP members understand the depth and scope of the EJP universe beyond the specific program with which they're affiliated.

While we value their work in individual programs, we encourage all members to explore EJP as a whole, and hope that their explorations will help them find their best place within EJP.

We hope that this handbook provides answers to your questions and offers guidance to make your participation with EJP as meaningful and impactful as possible.





EJP History

Early Days: Education Beyond Bars

In 2005, Rebecca Ginsburg, a new faculty member in the Department of Landscape Architecture, began to consider how to create a prison education program at the University of Illinois. She had taught at San Quentin State Prison while a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, and was excited about the possibility of starting a similar program at the University of Illinois. By fall 2006 she had formed a working group of University of Illinois graduate students, faculty members, and community members, many of whom also had experience in prison education. They tentatively called the initiative “Education Beyond Bars.”

One of their first challenges was deciding which prison to partner with. They chose Danville Correctional Center based on its proximity to the Urbana campus and its large associate degree program (at that time, through Lake Land Community College), which would feed into the University of Illinois’s upper-division program.

From 2006 to 2008, the group—made up of Tage Biswalo, Tracy Dace, Rebecca Ginsburg, Arturo Martinez, Sarah Ross, Rob Scott, and William Sullivan—visited prison education programs in California and New York, built alliances off and on campus, raised funds, and educated themselves about prison education.

2008 Launch

A 2008 survey among potential students at Danville revealed a high level of interest in the program and convinced administrators at the University of Illinois of the value of a program. Attorneys for the University of Illinois and IDOC crafted a Memo of Understanding (MOU) that allowed the project, now called the Education Justice Project, to implement a semester-long pilot in Spring 2009.

While the MOU was being approved, EJP offered two not-for-credit reading groups at the prison. This allowed instructors to get comfortable with the protocols that would allow the program to run smoothly and prepared Danville students for upper-division level work. In January 2009, EJP’s first for-credit classes were offered at DCC. Fifty-four incarcerated individuals enrolled in four courses.

Building a Universe

Since then, EJP's offerings at the prison have expanded greatly in response to student and instructor interest. We currently have about twelve programs, in addition to for-credit courses. The Reentry Guide Initiative started in 2015, around the time we started our internship program. In 2022 we hired our first full-time policy and research director. EJP now also includes a significant number of technical support staff, including the data stewardship team, graphic design team, and communications team. Please find an organization chart on page 30.

Outside of the University of Illinois, EJP led efforts to develop the Illinois Coalition of Higher Education in Prison and is a member of the Big 10 Coalition for Higher Education in Prison. We have hosted two national symposia on prison higher education, in 2010 and 2014. We helped to organize the Freedom to Learn Campaign, a statewide coalition dedicated to advocating for college-in-prison programs.

As EJP has expanded, we have deepened our commitment to collaborative leadership, critical pedagogy, and self-reflection. At the same time, we continue to learn from peer programs and value the network of educators, incarcerated students, formerly incarcerated people, family members, researchers, prison activists, and others who help to inform and guide our work.

We invite collaboration on publications, research, conferences, and other initiatives.

What's New with EJP

The 2023-24 academic year will see the launch of two important new educational initiatives by the Education Justice Project. There are a couple of other notable developments as well.

1. EJP Initiative at Menard Correctional Center

After fifteen years of offering educational programs at Danville Correctional Center, EJP plans to launch a pilot program at Menard Correctional Center in fall 2023. Incarcerated individuals at Menard, a maximum-security men's state prison, have had meager access to post-secondary education in recent decades. Offering opportunities at the facility has long been a priority of the Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison and the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). EJP plans to start slowly, offering college preparation courses and occasional workshops, and eventually offering for-credit college courses. We want to engage Illinois instructors as well as partner with institutions and individual faculty located closer to the facility, which is in Southern Illinois.

2. EJP-York High School Program

With funding from the General Assembly, EJP intends to launch a high school program at Danville Correctional Center. Working in collaboration with the Chicago Public School system, EJP will support incarcerated youth ages 18 - 22 in taking synchronous and asynchronous courses toward their high school diplomas. The program will be structured with two daily sessions: synchronous morning classes taught by teachers from the Consuela B. York High School in Chicago and evening study sessions in which EJP students serve as teaching assistants and mentors. To our knowledge, this will be the only instance in the country of a public high school maintaining a branch within a state prison, and certainly the only instance of incarcerated college students serving as designated tutors to incarcerated high school students.

Strategic Objectives 2022-25

Every three years, EJP's Strategic Planning Committee, a subcommittee of the EJP Advisory Council, develops our next set of strategic objectives. In between, it assesses our progress and determines whether any changes should be made.

The Strategic Planning Committee met in May 2022 with external facilitator Jen Knapp. After considering our previous strategic objectives, the current needs and interests of the program, and the larger context for EJP's work, it set the following four objectives.

We intend for these objectives to drive our decision-making and resource-allocation over the next three years. This process will be successful if all EJP members are aware of the objectives and leaders are made accountable for their fulfillment.

1. Continue Excellence in College-in-Prison Programming

Building on the success of our college-in-prison program, we will continue to evolve and deliver an exceptional higher education program at Danville Correctional Center. This includes strategic development of each of our 12 programs at the prison, responding to the evolving needs of EJP students. We will build strong relationships with other educational institutions at Danville, centering the needs of students in these collaborations. We will continue to offer support to students transitioning out of prison, in order to assist their continued success in college and life, and commit to exploring innovative ways of supporting them. Through ongoing reflection and systematic evaluation among its stakeholders, EJP will ensure that our educational programming meets the needs of students and serves as an exemplar of quality prison higher education.

2. Develop a Continuum of Post-Release Resources and Initiatives

In recognition of the challenges faced by formerly incarcerated individuals who seek to pursue their educational goals and build healthy lives upon release, we will continue to develop reentry resources and initiatives that fill existing gaps in the reentry landscape and that grow out of our engagement with incarcerated scholars. These include the Prison-to-Gown Initiative that provides pathways to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, an expanded scholarship program, and a strong reentry resource website. Acknowledging that deportation constitutes part of the American carceral system, we will continue to develop our deportation guide and turn it into a national resource. We will explore the feasibility of developing or supporting others' efforts to create a reentry warmline. We will advocate for best practices in reentry guide production and support other jurisdictions' efforts to create excellent guides. We will continue to explore what it means to produce reentry resources in an abolitionist spirit.

3. Design and Become a Campus Center

Institutional stability, greater visibility, and a secure funding stream will support EJP's short- and long-term planning and, accordingly, our ability to act proactively and ambitiously. To that end, we will maintain our efforts to become a campus center. This step will also put us in a strong position to expand EJP's impact on campus, especially on undergraduate education. We will continue to develop strong relationships with a range of external funders who will become committed partners of EJP's work. We will strive to become a model center—mission-driven, committed to inclusion, racial equity, and justice, and dedicated to building a sense of community and purpose.

4. Provide Support and Assistance at National Scale

EJP seeks to be a valued partner and thought leader for higher education in prison, reentry resources, and other aspects of our work. We will seed other programs, be a driver in policy work at the state level, provide technical assistance, host convenings, and develop and share evaluation protocols. In doing so, we will continue to amplify the voices of EJP scholars and alumni. EJP has a role to play in the current discussions around prison higher education, reentry, and equity on college campuses. Our students, alumni, and instructors can offer critical, powerful perspectives on these matters. They are in an ideal position to generate scholarship that adds critical nuance and hard data. This is an important time to be active contributors to the national conversation about the value of education for incarcerated individuals and how it benefits our society.

EJP Values

Consensus
Openness
Flexibility
Debate
Trying New Things
Social Justice
Gentleness
Unconventionality
Research-Driven
Critical Approach
Applying Our Moral Principles
Transparency
Food*
Compassion
Inclusivity
Participation
Creativity
Respect
Courage
En Lak'esh**
Community

EJP's **vision** is a more humane and just society, sustained through education and critical awareness.

*We regret that IDOC regulations do not allow us to live out our value of food within Danville Correctional Center.

**This is a Mayan expression meaning "I am you" or "You are me."

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In 2018 EJP launched a new initiative that we hope will help us to create a more inclusive, respectful climate. The initial impulse came from a long-standing desire to align the racial demographics of outside EJP members more closely with those of EJP students, who are majority Black and Brown. Demographics form part of our inclusion plan, but the plan extends beyond that. On pages 63-65, you can learn more about the various aspects of EJP's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative.

Nothing about EJP's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative suggests that there are or have been racial conflicts within EJP. It simply acknowledges that we inhabit a world

in which injustices exist along certain lines of identity, including race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, to name just a few. We are committed to interrogating these constructs in and out of the classroom, as befits a university. This represents best practices on the Urbana campus as well. We are committed to ongoing evaluation of this effort and the way it is being implemented.

Please join the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee if you'd like to learn more about this effort or to become involved. Contact Julia Spielmann, who leads this initiative, at juliaspielmann0@gmail.com. She's happy to answer questions and address concerns.

EJP Inclusion Commitment

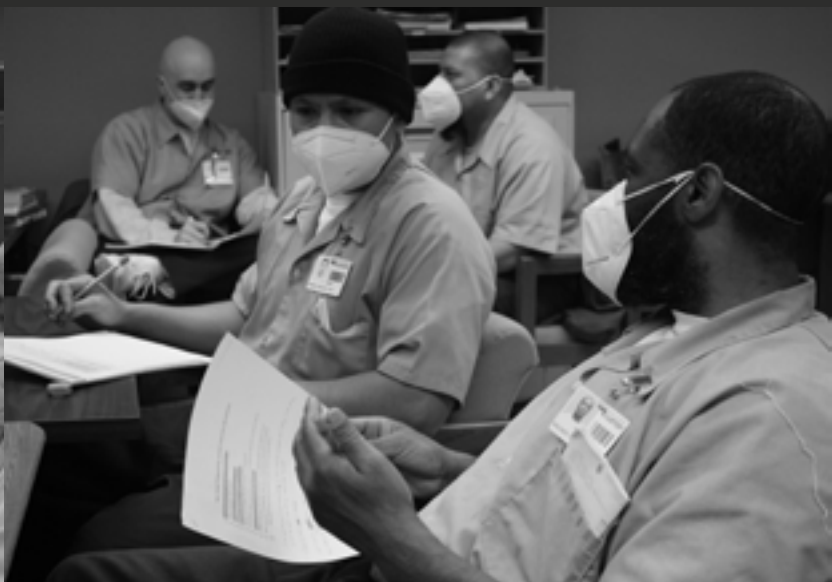
We recognize that in order to build a model college-in-prison program we must honor the value and dignity of all EJP members. We commit to individual and organizational action to build respect, dignity, fairness, caring, equity, and self-esteem in our communities.

Therefore, we commit to:

- creating and maintaining an environment that affirms all people regardless of their age, culture, ability, ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, marital status, nationality, race, religion/ spiritual beliefs, veteran status, sexual/affectional orientation, socioeconomic status, citizenship status, criminal system involvement or other identity or status.

- probing and surfacing our assumptions and expectations in an environment of mutual caring and curiosity.
- educating our members through training, dialogue, and our ongoing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan.
- recognizing the historical roots and challenging the existing frameworks of oppression and injustice by enhancing the intellectual, social, and emotional functioning of our members.
- honoring the diverse strengths, needs, voices, and backgrounds of all members of our communities and the implications these have for our daily interactions.

Please join us in living these values.



Programs and Initiatives 2023-24

The following is a brief list of our current programs and initiatives. For more information, see the “How Can You Get Involved?” section of this handbook on page 31 or visit our website at educationjustice.net/programs

1. College-in-Prison Program

A. For-Credit Courses

EJP offers primarily upper-division (300-and 400-level). University of Illinois courses to men incarcerated at Danville.

B. Academic Advising

Advisors support the academic needs and facilitate the success of EJP students through workshops and connections to important resources.

C. Writing and Math Partners (WAMP)

Several times each week trained writing and math tutors from campus offer academic support to EJP students.

D. EJP Community Library

Our library includes a collection of over 2,000 items. EJP students are trained, primarily by one another, in librarianship skills while maintaining the collection.

E. Business Workshops

Our business workshops help students gain confidence in foundational skills and learn about a variety of business-related topics.

F. Writing Workshops

Writing workshops seek to improve students' writing abilities by offering guided instruction and practice in a wide variety of writing-related subjects.

G. STEM Workshops

These not-for-credit workshops invite students to explore a range of topics in science, technology, engineering, and math.

H. Mindfulness Discussion Group (MDG)

This group introduces students to research in the field of mindfulness and encourages students to develop a daily meditation practice.

I. Community Anti-Violence Education (CAVE)

Trained EJP students facilitate biweekly mentoring and anti-violence education sessions with men aged 18-35 in the general population.

Programs and Initiatives 2023-24

Continued list of our programs and initiatives.

1. College-in-Prison Program

K. Guest Lecture Series

This is a series of guest lectures, including an annual lecture co-hosted by EJP and the Illinois Humanities Institute. This year the speaker is TBD.

L. Language Partners (LP)

Language Partners involves EJP students or “teaching partners” providing English as a second language (ESL) instruction to English language learners from the general population.

M. Reading Groups

Each spring EJP students and current instructors are invited to submit proposals for summer reading groups. Incoming EJP students must enroll in the New Student Reading Group, which prepares them for upper-division course work.

N. EJP Computer Lab and Computer Workshops

The EJP Computer Lab at DCC consists of a server and 15 workstations that support EJP curricular and extracurricular activities. The lab is home to workshops that allow students to gain confidence in diverse aspects of computing.

2. Reentry Guide Initiative (RGI)

A. Distribution

The distribution team works to get the guides to individuals in Illinois prisons, service providers, and others who request it.

C. Outreach

The outreach team connects RGI with other reentry organizations in Illinois.

B. Research and Writing

RGI includes a team of researchers, writers, and editors who produce two guides: Mapping Your Future: A Guide to Successful Reentry and A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges and Opportunities After Deportation.

D. Other

RGI also produces reentry videos, maintains a resource website, and hosts events to increase public understanding of reentry and deportation policies.

3. Prison-to-Gown Pathway

EJP's Prison-to-Gown initiative will provide support for University of Illinois students who have interacted with the criminal justice system.

4. Internship Program

EJP interns support the EJP office and EJP's programs and missions. In the past, interns have responded to reentry guide requests, handled EJP communications and social media, managed EJP records and archives, worked on fundraising and database entry, and more.

5. Research and Policy

A. Campus Scan

In support of our Prison-to-Gown Pathway initiative, EJP is conducting an audit of the challenges formerly incarcerated students face at the University of Illinois, with a goal to implement services that will help address those challenges and remove barriers on our campus.

C. Statewide Policy

As a member of the Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison and the Freedom to Learn Campaign, EJP supports statewide efforts to enhance higher education in prisons in Illinois and related efforts.

B. Research Group

Members of this group discuss drafts of one another's scholarship on topics related to incarceration or criminal justice.

Programs and Initiatives 2022-23

Continued list of our programs and initiatives.

6. EJP-York High School Program

EJP is starting a high school program at Danville Correctional Center. Working in collaboration with the Chicago Public School system, EJP will support incarcerated youth ages 18–22 in pursuing their high school diploma.

7. Menard

EJP plans to launch a pilot program at Menard Correctional Center in Fall 2023. Initial offerings will include college preparation courses and workshops.



How Does EJP Operate?

Governance

EJP could not function without the efforts and dedication of our members. This section explains how EJP operates and how you can take on decision-making roles within it.

Structure

EJP is a unit of the Department of Educational Policy, Organization, and Leadership in the College of Education. Neither a department nor a non-profit organization, we strive to create a distinct, innovative structure that reflects our values while efficiently supporting our mission.

Our effort to experiment in the service of creating a truly democratic, inclusive program while simultaneously being engaged in challenging work on the ground can sometimes be messy. We are, admittedly, taking on a lot, and there are few models to guide us. However, for many of us involved with EJP, it is important not only to do socially important work within prisons and the community, but also to do it within a structure that avoids the most deleterious aspects of either academic or prison culture.

Accordingly, we aim to build a program with transparent, participatory governance in an open and inclusive spirit. This effort is represented by EJP's Inclusion Commitment.

For instance, in fall 2017 an EJP survey showed that 87% of EJP instructors are white, while 48% of EJP students are African American, 30% Latino, and 23% white. Part of building a more inclusive and diverse EJP is considering the significance of those numbers and thinking critically about what we'd like our demographics to be.

In order to do this, we need members who are willing to do more than teach or take classes. We require members willing to participate in conversations about how we do what we do, and what policies and procedures best align with our mission and values.

EJP Positions

EJP generally partners with progressive organizations and sometimes endorses causes whose values align with our own commitment to creating a more humane and just society. We recognize that EJP is made up of diverse individuals with unique, varied, and evolving opinions and ideas. We welcome discussion and dialogue and do not expect our members to agree on all matters. We encourage members of the EJP universe to make their voices heard both inside and outside EJP, if they so desire.

Prison Abolition Statement

EJP would not exist but for the hard and painful reality that our society incarcerates individuals. Through our programs and activities, EJP seeks to mitigate the impacts of incarceration today and to create conditions that support the creation of more humane and just responses to harm and violence.

The fact that we do these things by necessarily engaging with a system that many (not all) EJP members find abhorrent creates a tension that runs through just about everything we do.

How do we ensure that EJP partners effectively with prison staff and administrators, creating smooth-running programs that become part of

the day-to-day at Danville Correctional Center, without becoming part of the prison apparatus? How do we argue for expansion of higher education in prisons across the state, while at the same time insisting on the need to close prisons?

What does an abolitionist reentry guide look like? Or an abolitionist college-in-prison program? What would it look like for our host institution, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, to enact abolitionist values?

We are committed to continued interrogation of these and similar queries, in a spirit of inclusion and critical reflection.

Consensus

One of EJP's values is consensus, which is often misunderstood. Consensus does not mean that everyone needs to agree; instead, it means that we value discussion, debate, and active listening, and that we want each member's voice to contribute to our evolving understanding on any given matter. Voting often has the effect of cutting debate short when it's clear that a majority on any given position exists. Seeking consensus on key decisions, which is EJP's practice, imposes the obligation to keep talking, which makes it more likely that minority positions will be aired and inform the discussion. At the same time, unanimity isn't required. Decisions can move forward when dissenters agree to step aside in the spirit of accepting the clear will of the group overall.

A Note About Confidentiality

Our shared desire for transparency and inclusive decision-making occasionally runs up against the need to protect the privacy of EJP instructors, students, prison security concerns, and the well-being of EJP itself. These have traditionally been stressful moments for EJP, when, after any given incident, some members' very human urges to learn the "whole story" are thwarted by others' efforts to contain information.

We continue to think through the healthiest way to approach these incidents, which can sometimes undermine the spirit of openness that we strive for. At the same time, these are opportunities to reflect on the nature of privilege (e.g., to information), power, authority, and humility. We serve our members best when we treat such moments of friction as chances for personal and institutional growth.

EJP Personnel

Core Staff

We sometimes refer to our core staff as “EJP Central.” They currently consist of the following roles:

The EJP director oversees all aspects of our work and has direct responsibility for fundraising, communication, and external relations. The position is currently held by Rebecca Ginsburg, one of EJP’s co-founders. Rebecca is not hired by EJP but is a tenured faculty member at U of I, and the university pays her salary.

The operations director oversees clearances, expenditures, facilities and infrastructure, and reimbursements. This position also heads up EJP’s extensive internship program. Jamie Hines has been operations director since October 2015.

The academic director oversees academic programming at DCC, including student affairs and academic advising. EJP is seeking a new academic director at this time.

The Reentry Guide director is a full-time position that oversees the Reentry Guide Initiative. Lee Ragsdale has held this position since 2020. She is supported by Manpreet Kaur Gurtatta, RGI Outreach and Distribution Coordinator. Katie Fizedale is EJP’s liaison to

the College of Education’s Human Relations Department and supports paid EJP staff in HR-related matters. She is also the assistant to the EJP director.

Ashton Hoselton is EJP’s first full-time director of policy and research and oversees our policy internship program.

Michael Brawn, an EJP alumnus, is EJP’s first Prison-to-Gown Pathway Manager.

Brian Dolinar is the EJP writer.

College-in-Prison Coordinators

EJP’s biggest initiative is our college-in-prison program, which consists of 12 programs (see page 17–20), each of which has a coordinator. Open coordinator positions are listed on the EJP website and announced via our weekly electronic newsletter, “EJP This Week.” These openings are filled via an application process. Unless a special grant makes funding possible, coordinators are not paid, but receive a stipend of \$2,000 per semester. Program coordinators meet monthly to discuss strategy and policy and to support one another. With all members of their program, they are responsible for setting program goals, policies, procedures and activities. They also have budgeting responsibilities.

EJP Members

a) Outside Members

Many of us avoid the word “volunteer” because it suggests a charity mindset and a less invested relationship to EJP than does “member.” The term “volunteer” also absolves the university of responsibility for supporting EJP and integrating prison education into its operations. With a volunteer mindset, higher education in prison is a charity that a few individuals are involved with rather than an integral part of what the campus does as a land grant institution committed to equity and access. Finally, the word “volunteer” suggests a passive relationship to EJP’s work. Members, on the other hand, are people who take ownership of our programming. Outside EJP members who participate as members in a given program share responsibility with the coordinator for defining goals, policies, procedures, and activities.

b) Incarcerated Members

EJP students and affiliates form the core of the EJP universe. Along with outside members and program coordinators, they have responsibility for ensuring that on-site programs run smoothly and with integrity.

c) Alumni Members

Formerly incarcerated EJP students retain their connection to the University of Illinois. For example, the university student number they receive at DCC remains their number for their entire life. Unfortunately, current IDOC regulations restrict the contact that EJP

members with clearance can have with EJP alumni. EJP alumni participate with the Reentry Guide Initiative and the Advisory Council, and frequently give talks on campus.

d) Other Staff

Many individuals, primarily undergrad and grad students, provide technical support in a number of areas, including graphic design, data stewardship, communications, and office support.

e) Consultants

Each year EJP contracts with professionals such as website developers and leadership coaches who provide services that support our work.

f) Advisory Council

Between 16 and 20 individuals from the community and campus meet three times each year to provide medium- and long-term guidance to the EJP director. The council’s subcommittees include nominating, fundraising, grievance, resilience and strategic planning. The Nominating Committee accepts nominations, including self-nominations, for the Advisory Council and its various committees throughout the year, and new members join the Advisory Council each summer. We welcome EJP members’ participation on the council. Greg Jahiel currently chairs the Nominating Committee, and individuals can reach out to him directly if they’re interested in learning more about the opportunities on the Advisory Council. His contact is g_jahiel@yahoo.com.

Key People 2023-24

Key Staff

Michael Brawn, Prison to Gown Pathway Program Manager, brawn1@illinois.edu

Katie Fizdale: assistant to the EJP director, fizdale@illinois.edu

Rebecca Ginsburg: EJP director, rginsbur@illinois.edu

Jamie Hines: operations director, jlhines@illinois.edu

Ashton Hoselton: policy and research director, ahoselto@illinois.edu

Lee Ragsdale: RGI director, kragdsda2@illinois.edu

Academic director: TBD

Advisory Council

Melissa Keeble, chair, EJP Advisory Council, mrkeeeble99@gmail.com

Greg Jahiel: chair, nominating committee, g_jahiel@yahoo.com

RGI Coordinators

Manpreet Kaur Gurtatta: RGI outreach and distribution coordinator, mg70@illinois.edu

RGI research and writing coordinator: TBD

College-in-Prison Program Coordinators

Amber Dunse: Language Partners co-coordinator,
dunse2@illinois.edu

Calen Gutwein, Language Partners co-coordinator
gutwein1@illinois.edu

Michael Muneses: Computer Lab co-coordinator,
mmuneses@illinois.edu

Steve Cox: Computer Lab co-coordinator,
rscox@illinois.edu

Julia Spielmann: Mindfulness Discussion Group
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Eva Kuras, Writing Workshop co-coordinator,
emkuras2@illinois.edu

Kelli McQueen, Writing Workshop co-coordinator,
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Jessica Thornton, Business Workshop Coordinator

EJP community librarian: TBD

Others

Erick Nava: scholarship coordinator

Nic Quero: head intern, nquero2@illinois.edu

Erick Nava: Emergency Fund administrator

Finances

The Education Justice Project receives funding from three sources: the University of Illinois, foundations outside of the university, and private donations from individuals.

EJP's budget during our first ten years was achingly modest. For example, in 2016-17, our expenditures totaled less than \$110,000.

In 2017, we received a 3-year \$1 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. It was a game changer. Mellon funds allowed us to grow our programs, enhance our administrative infrastructure, and attract additional foundation and university support. We received a second 3-year million-dollar grant from Mellon in 2020.

Mellon funds support staff salaries, instructor and coordinator stipends, instructional materials, professional development, and reentry guide printing, among other things. The U of I campus supports other salaries and pays most of our rent at the YMCA.

The Joyce Foundation currently supports our policy work and the Prison-to-Gown Pathway Program. Ascendium Philanthropy supports the Reentry Guide Initiative and the EJP-York program is supported by the Illinois General Assembly. Smaller grants from other foundations contribute to specific areas such as scholarships and alumni speaking stipends.

Grassroots fundraising is important to EJP, not just because we rely on the funds that individuals and local congregations provide EJP, but also because of the ethics around making ourselves accountable to people who support our work and are impacted by it. Donations from EJP students (yes, from currently incarcerated individuals) and family members who receive reentry guides from us are especially meaningful, for that reason. In 2022-23 we raised about \$50,000 of such donations.

No gift is too small. All donations make a difference, and we greatly value the contributions of individuals whose lives EJP touches.

We will apply for a third Mellon grant in Fall 2023. Mellon funds are not intended to be permanent, but to take a program to the point of sustainability. We continue to seek other sources of funding, including ongoing support from the University of Illinois.

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, our anticipated budget will be about \$1,200,000.

Culture & Climate

EJP is committed to creating an open, inclusive, critical, and supportive culture that fosters reflection, critique, dialogue, and practice. We're also committed to talking a lot about this — evaluating how we're doing, questioning our efforts, and educating ourselves about best practices and how we can improve.

Critical Climate Initiative

We host an ongoing series of activities that encourage reflection on our shared work, its political and social contexts, and our individual places within it. We refer to this as our Critical Conversations initiative, and you can read more about it on page 68 of this handbook.

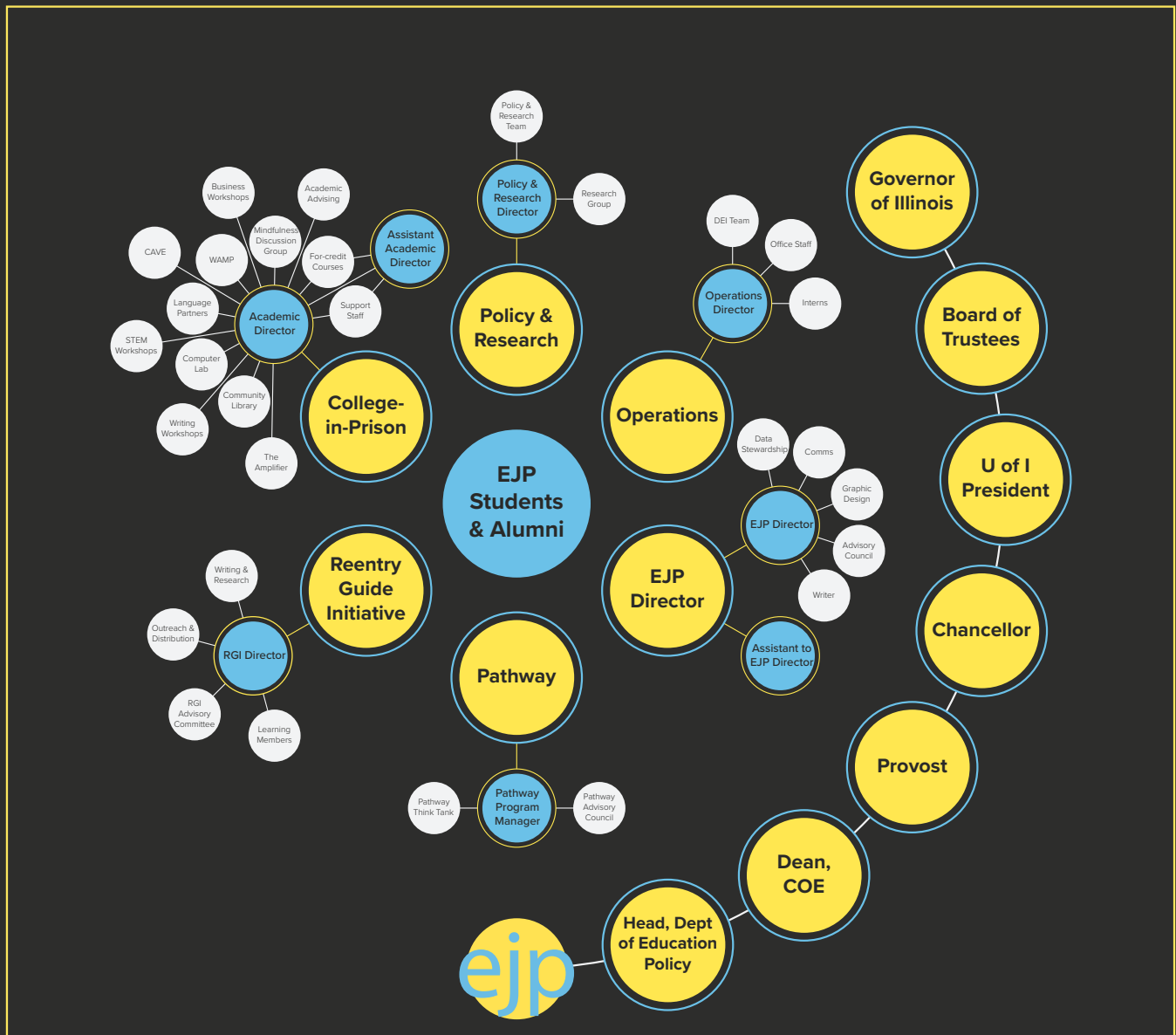
The topic this year is

Mental Health

All active EJP members are required to attend **at least one** Critical Conversations activity each year.

Education Justice Project Organizational Chart

2023





How Can You
Get Involved?

A. On-Site Programs

The majority of EJP members are involved with our learning community at Danville Correctional Center, either as instructors or as students.

EJP Instructors

The term “EJP instructor” refers to all non-incarcerated individuals who participate in our prison-based programs, including for-credit course instructors, workshop facilitators, WAMP tutors, library support team members, and all others.

Why Become an EJP Instructor?

Becoming a member of a prison-based learning community allows you to grow as a teacher, learn about criminal justice and incarceration, make a difference in the lives of your students and their families, expand your professional network, and develop your leadership abilities. It allows you to engage in a meaningful way with a significant social issue: the incarceration of disproportionate numbers of people of color and economically disadvantaged people. Through this work, you are likely to feel challenged, engaged, and humbled.

Please be aware of what we ask from instructors. We ask that they be open to growth and learning, engage with and support other EJP members, follow through on commitments to the best of their abilities, and help our community to flourish and improve. EJP typically accepts instructor applications twice a year, on **March 1** and **October 1**.

Application and Selection Process

Admission into EJP is a selective and sometimes competitive process. All EJP programs require evidence of one’s seriousness of purpose and a demonstrated ability to engage in critical reflection about prison education and one’s role in that enterprise. In some cases, we also seek particular skill sets. For example, for-credit course instructors must be qualified to teach on the Urbana campus. Mindfulness Discussion Group members must have their own mindfulness practices.

Being an EJP instructor requires more than performing the particular task a person applies for—e.g., teaching a class or facilitating a workshop. We also ask members to invest time and energy in reflecting on your experience at the prison and supporting others’ efforts to do so. You will have a chance to learn more about our expectations during the application process. All EJP roles require submission of a CV and application form, a group interview, and a reference check. (For-credit course instructors must submit cover letters instead of application forms.) The group interview is a good opportunity to ask questions about the program you are interested in. You are welcome to apply to more than one program.

We ask those who are selected to work with EJP at Danville sign an agreement that indicates they understand the associated responsibilities and commitments. It is especially important that individuals working at the prison understand the importance of following DCC and Illinois Department of Corrections regulations.

After an applicant has been offered and accepted a position with EJP, they begin two processes: orientation into EJP and clearance from IDOC. New instructors will receive a general orientation to EJP and a program-specific one. They'll also attend training from DCC and learn about prison policies and regulations.

The clearance process is a weeks-long procedure through which EJP seeks approval from IDOC to allow particular individuals to regularly enter the prison. As instructors go through the clearance process, we encourage them to start attending EJP events and getting to know the program.

After receiving clearance, instructors officially become "Education Justice Faculty Affiliates." This is a lifelong designation, in part because there are lifelong conditions that apply to having once received clearance from IDOC.

Working at the Prison

Teaching incarcerated students can be rewarding, challenging, and transformative. It can also bring up a range of emotional responses, including anger, grief, and much more. We ask all EJP instructors, whatever form of teaching they engage in, to participate in activities that will help them process their experiences, make sense of the larger

structural issues related to incarceration, and support others.

We encourage EJP instructors to discuss learning and pedagogy with one another. These discussions, within a community of teachers who care deeply about creating critical learning environments, can support professional growth and better teaching even outside of the prison.

While we understand that instructors come to EJP with their own teaching styles and pedagogical priorities, we ask that you please adhere to the following:

- Create a professional atmosphere of trust and mutual regard.
- Be available to all students as equitably as possible.
- Be honest and sincere. Our students are expert BS-spotters.
- Ensure that students are aware of your commitment to their success.
- Look for gains in skill, however small, that demonstrate growth and use them as the basis for encouragement.
- Show respect for students by involving them in classroom decision-making.
- As in any educational setting, seek understanding of students' various backgrounds and current contexts, and how those might impact a given student's class performance. At the same time, respect student privacy.

Conduct

The Education Justice Project operates at DCC with the permission of IDOC. All EJP instructors are asked to remember that they are guests

at the prison. DCC policies include observing the dress code (no scarves, pants only, modest attire); addressing students by last name and “Mr.,” and restricting physical contact between instructors and students to handshakes.

EJP’s policies for instructors require that they do not ask students what they are serving time for, do not receive written materials from students that are not academic in nature, and behave toward students and one another in a professional, respectful manner, bearing in mind EJP’s Group Commitments (see page 52) as a guide.

EJP instructors have the right to participate in outside organizations, groups, and protests that align with their values. If anyone was ever banned from DCC for participation in another group, we would fight that decision and encourage the university to back us in that fight. To date, this has never happened.

Ongoing Learning

We encourage all of our members to engage in the community of higher- education-in-prison programs by attending the National Conference on Higher Education in Prison.

This annual conference seeks to foster collaboration, connection, and support between members of the college-in-prison community.

Reviews

At the end of each semester, each EJP instructor is asked to complete a self-assessment form and discuss it with their program coordinator. The review provides an opportunity for instructors to discuss challenges and receive one-on-one coaching.

It also allows them to consider whether they’d like to explore other opportunities within EJP.

It frequently happens that an EJP member will identify a need within EJP and offer to fill it. We welcome that sort of initiative. When the quality of an EJP instructor’s work is in question, their coordinator will provide feedback, offer suggestions for growth, and explore transitioning from the program if that seems appropriate.

Leaving

There are EJP faculty affiliates throughout the United States, as well as in Taiwan, India, Germany, England, Mexico, and other countries. We try to stay connected to former EJP instructors through periodic mailings, Mango, the EJP newsletter, the student newsletter, and fundraising activities. When an instructor leaves EJP, we invite them to dedicate a book of their choice to the EJP Community Library at DCC and to inscribe a bookplate that will be placed within the volume.

An instructor’s status as an Education Justice Faculty Affiliate remains even after they step away from active work with EJP. This means all instructors must continue to honor the conditions associated with clearance. For example, instructors are unlikely to get permission to visit individuals incarcerated at DCC.

Follow Us Online!

Website: educationjustice.net

Facebook: @educationjustice

Instagram: @ejp_at_il

EJP Students

Why Become an EJP Student?

Participation with EJP offers an opportunity to be part of a supportive, diverse community within DCC; to exercise and develop leadership, in and outside of the classroom; and to give back even while incarcerated.

Perhaps most significantly, EJP plunges students into a world of learning, scholarship, and ideas that can be challenging, thrilling, and transformative. Higher education provides a sense of connection with important thinkers from the past and present alike. Students find their minds becoming sharper and more open as they advance in their personal educational journeys. These are just a few of the reasons to participate in higher education in prison.

Please note that EJP students are not compensated for attending class. However, eligible individuals may receive good time.

Application Process

Anyone who has 40 credit hours of lower-division academic course credits, formally applies to EJP, and elects to take the University of Illinois courses that EJP offers or participates in any EJP programming at DCC is considered an EJP student.

We accept applications to EJP once a year, in the spring.

We hold information sessions at the prison each March and applications are due in April. The process includes confirming an applicants' credit hours and involves contacting all the institutions at which a prospective student earned academic credit.

Students accepted into the program must take the new student reading group over the summer.

***Please note:** vocational courses and 000 level courses do not count toward the 40-hour requirement to participate in the program.

Being an EJP Student

Rigorous for-credit courses form the core of the EJP universe. We encourage all students to enroll and push themselves with the intellectual demands of University of Illinois classes. Instructors strive to make EJP courses comparable to courses offered on the Urbana-Champaign campus. This is not easy, since students on the traditional campus have ready access to computers and the internet, along with many other resources at their disposal. Even with these limitations, EJP courses are demanding and instructors often report that student work at DCC is comparable to what they would find on the traditional campus. In some cases, EJP students perform at a higher level.

Students who successfully complete EJP courses earn transferable U of I credit that can be applied to academic institutions on the outside and to EIU's degree program at Danville. On occasion, a student is released before finishing a course. If this happens near the end of the semester, it is usually possible to work out an arrangement with the instructor, such that the student can complete the course requirements and receive a grade and course credit.

In addition to for-credit courses, other academic programs are available to EJP students. We encourage you to sign up for extracurricular activities (e.g. Mindfulness Discussion Group and Writing Workshops), join committees (e.g. convocation committee), and attend events at the prison (e.g. guest lectures and symposia). We place special emphasis on writing and communication. EJP students are scholars.

We provide opportunities to participate in conferences, submit pieces to the EJP blog, and write academic papers for journals. EJP students have also published articles in local newspapers. Sometimes a writing opportunity might grow out of a particular class or extracurricular program. Calls for Papers (CFPs) are frequently posted in the EJP Community Library.

We strongly urge EJP students to attend all-student meetings and convocations, which are held each semester. These are important ways of supporting the wider EJP community and remaining up-to-date on developments within the program.

Conduct

EJP does not have a complicated code of conduct. We expect students to observe the University of Illinois Student Code (available in the EJP Community Library) and support the creation of a critical, open, inclusive, and caring learning environment at DCC. Any behavior that undermines such an environment or violates the U of I Student Code breaches our code of conduct. Examples of such behavior include acting disrespectfully towards another individual in the program, plagiarizing

course work, or attempting to develop a non-professional relationship with an Instructor. The EJP Group Commitments (see page 52) should guide students and instructors in both in-person and correspondence courses. Those commitments stress clear, honest communication.

One of the most unique and important qualities of EJP is the opportunity it provides for leadership. Every conversation, action, and scholarly text contributes to our students' education, and provides an occasion for you to educate others. We ask EJP students to carefully consider how they carry themselves. Choosing to participate in EJP sends a powerful message about the value of education, and we encourage EJP students to both recognize and embody the importance of this act.

Leaving

Once part of EJP, a student is always part of EJP.

Even after students leave Danville, we strive to stay connected. The University of Illinois will treat you as an alumnus, and you should be prepared to receive mail from campus, including requests for donations. It is customary for students to give back to the universities where they studied, and EJP welcomes such support.

Prior to a student's release, we will request to hold a transition interview with them. This provides an opportunity for the student to provide feedback on the program and for us to collect relevant contact information. In addition, we invite students to reflect on their future plans and remind them that we are available to

support their efforts to continue their education on the outside.

Finally, we invite each outgoing student to dedicate a book of their choice to the EJP Community Library at DCC. Many of our alumni take advantage of speaking opportunities. There are invitations to visit the U of I at Urbana-Champaign campus for special events and also to speak to classes on campus. We are committed to helping students continue their education if that is something they wish to do. We offer help with the application process. Additionally, EJP has scholarship opportunities. There is a new scholarship for currently incarcerated students. EJP has two scholarships of \$1,000 each that are available to formerly incarcerated individuals released from an IDOC adult facility. More information

about these scholarships is available on the EJP website at: <https://educationjustice.net/resources/#scholarships>.

When an EJP student transfers to another facility, we endeavor to stay connected, although this is dependent on IDOC policy. We want to support and encourage continued engagement with higher education for all EJP students. In the past, we have done that through periodic mailings, including the EJP newsletter and books. Once transfer students are released, we encourage them to contact us at the EJP office, and to engage with EJP just as any other EJP alumnus would. The University of Illinois' commitment to past and potential future students is strong, whether they're released through Danville or a different prison.

B. Off-Site Programs

1. Reentry Guide Initiative

The effects of incarceration do not end when someone leaves prison. This is reentry – the challenging, often frightening period of time when an incarcerated person is released and encounters the need to relearn or regain employment, housing, healthy relationships, technology, and more.

There is no set amount of time in which someone is considered to be “reentering” society. Some may take weeks to adjust, others months or years. The scars of incarceration can last a lifetime.

Mission

The mission of the Reentry Guide Initiative (RGI) is to provide individuals and communities impacted by the trauma of incarceration with tools for self-empowerment., primarily through reentry guides. Our work is rooted in the experiences of currently and formerly incarcerated people. We believe that punitive incarceration damages our society, and that access to basic needs like housing, healthcare, and employment strengthens communities. As such, we assist in dismantling the carceral state by developing civic literacy for the formerly incarcerated and their support networks, and by advocating for change in the criminal legal system.

Reentry Resources

RGI produces three yearly guides, two for people being released from prison and another for people facing deportation. All guides are published in English and Spanish, in print and online.

Mapping Your Future: A Guide to Successful Reentry provides information and support for people returning to Illinois communities. We also produce a national reentry guide.

A New Path: A Guide to the Challenges and Opportunities after Deportation offers guidance and support for people facing deportation to Mexico and Central America. Like *Mapping Your Future*, it provides information on housing, employment and relationships, but also addresses changes that people being deported will face, from the confusion of arriving in a new country to cultural encounters.

The RGI team also maintains a searchable reentry resources website at reentryillinois.net.

Outreach

RGI’s work includes efforts to promote education about issues surrounding reentry and deportation in the community. The team has expanded its outreach efforts, working with organizations in other states to produce state-specific reentry resources and producing a national reentry guide.

Organization

Members of RGI participate in the following tasks related to producing and distributing the guides:

- **Research:** Interviewing formerly incarcerated individuals and service providers, and researching laws and services.
- **Revision:** Writing new sections of the guides or updating, editing, and fact-

checking existing ones.

- **Evaluation:** RGI members identify priority areas for improvement, based on user feedback.
- **Production and distribution:** Members in this role help design and print the guide before distributing it as widely as possible.
- **Fundraising:** Since the guides are offered free of charge, fundraising and grant writing to secure funds for printing and distribution are essential

How You Can Get Involved

If you are interested in joining RGI and Policy & Research Team, [fill out an application](#) on our website or email us at reentry@educationjustice.net. The interview process seeks to ensure that new members share our values and understand expectations.

Prospective members will participate in a few RGI meetings, be interviewed by current members, and attend an EJP event before being formally invited to join the group.

2. Prison-to-Gown Pathway

The Prison-to-Gown Pathway is EJP's newest initiative, launched in 2021. The program seeks to support students at the University of Illinois who have interacted with the criminal justice system in their path to graduating.

EJP was awarded a grant to start this program by the Joyce Foundation, a private foundation based in Chicago, in July 2021.

The initiative operates from an understanding that most institutions for higher education are not geared to address the specific challenges that formerly incarcerated people face. By taking specific measures to address those challenges, the program will increase formerly incarcerated students' ability to focus on coursework and improve their likelihood of completing a degree.

Formerly incarcerated students face significant hurdles in attending universities and colleges, from the application process through graduation. The costs of applying to schools, the complicated natures of online applications, as well as the stigma of their interactions with

the criminal justice system can leave many feeling isolated. The Prison-to-Gown Pathway will seek to address the challenges that these students face, improving their chances of being able to focus on their studies.

Pathway Timeline

In its first year, the program focused on learning and research, identifying the challenges and struggles formerly incarcerated people experience at U of I and exploring ways of supporting them. Taking the lead from other university campuses with similar programs, and by soliciting feedback from people with first-hand experience, members of the Prison-to-Gown Program have identified several major areas of concern, including housing, technology, campus culture, academic assistance, and counseling.

This year, the program's second, we are engaged in outreach and community education around the needs of justice-impacted students and the need for such a program.

In its third year, we expect to pilot services to a small group of students. Those services might include peer support, targeted programming, and/or a monthly stipend.

The Prison-to-Gown Pathway is not accepting members at this time. If you would like more information, email pathway@educationjustice.net.

3. Policy & Research Team

Mission & Theory of Change

The mission of EJP's Policy & Research Team is to educate and equip HEP stakeholders with knowledge, skills, and confidence to produce research and practice civic engagement. We seek to advance policies that are:

- Evidence-based and equitable;
- Informed by individuals and communities impacted by incarceration;
- Related to HEP, reentry, and other relevant issues.

We also believe that punitive incarceration damages our society. As such, we embrace policies, practices, and dialogues that:

- Challenge the dominant narrative around incarceration
- Mitigate the impacts of incarceration
- Support the creation of more humane and just responses to harm and violence
- Allow HEP programs to flourish only as long as prisons exist

What We Do

In addition to these goals, the Policy & Research Team also creates models and toolkits for other states and universities that want to support systems-involved individuals and produces materials and hosts events to support policy makers' understanding of the role and value of higher education in prison in Illinois.

EJP was a founding member of the [Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison \(IL-CHEP\)](#), a statewide coalition of educators, students, activists, universities, and other advocates dedicated to providing quality higher education for incarcerated people in Illinois. We remain active members of IL-CHEP and played a critical role in expanding the coalition's work to include a statewide legislative campaign, the [Freedom to Learn Campaign \(FTL\)](#). FTL works to educate legislators, prison officials, and the general public about the need for equitable statewide policies ensuring quality higher education in prison programs' operation without undue interference, censorship, or interruption.

Two specific achievements that have resulted from this campaign are:

- **House Joint Resolution 27**, passed unanimously by the Illinois General Assembly in October 2021, established the Illinois Higher Education in Prison Task Force, the first statewide task force on higher education in prison in the nation.
- **House Bill 3648**, signed into law by the governor in December 2023, requires the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education to collect and report data on higher education in prison programs.

How You Can Get Involved

Team members contribute in a variety of ways utilizing many different skills, including:

- Research current policies and evolving best practices related to higher education for justice-involved individuals
- Connect with state agencies, statewide coalitions, and local community organizations involved with HEP
- Draft publications and resources to raise awareness of HEP and the need for policy change
- Organize educational events

We accept applications to join EJP's Policy & Research Team year round. If you would like to join our learning community and support EJP's policy and research efforts, we invite you to contact us at policy@educationjustice.net.

C. Writing and Research

EJP is one of the few college-in-prison programs housed within a top-tier research university, an institution with an explicit commitment to contributing to the public good through intensive levels of research activity. Our mission, to demonstrate the positive impacts of prison higher education programs, acknowledges this context. We encourage EJP members to produce scholarship that supports our mission and otherwise serves the interests of the program, our students, and society.

Scholarship can take a variety of forms—presenting at conferences; writing articles in peer-reviewed journals; producing pieces for Urbana-Champaign-Danville newspapers; writing for the EJP blog; publishing poetry and fiction; editing and producing EJP collections, etc. The ethics of creating and disseminating knowledge that incorporates the voices of incarcerated individuals is not straightforward. Some of the issues are addressed in EJP’s Research Policy, which you can find in the Appendix of this handbook. We strongly encourage non-incarcerated EJP members to reflect on the potential for exploitation in such writing, and to consider co-authoring scholarship with interested EJP students as one way of mitigating such problems.

Research Group

EJP’s Research Group meets monthly and provides a supportive and encouraging forum for non-incarcerated members to share works in progress. This group is open to both members and non-members of EJP.

Travel Award

Twice each year, EJP issues five awards of up to \$500 each for EJP members to attend conferences on topics related to EJP’s mission. Erick Nava, our scholarship coordinator, coordinates this funding opportunity. It is not necessary to present a paper to receive an award. You can reach Erick at scholarships@educationjustice.net.

EJP Publications

In line with our Strategic Objectives, EJP has expanded our production of “one-pagers” on various topics related to higher education in prison. Topics include the representation of incarcerated scholars (co-written by EJP students), why in-person instruction is preferred, and the benefits of higher education in prison. You can view these resources on the EJP website. We welcome ideas for future one-pagers. You can contact EJP Policy and Research Director Ashton Hoselton at info@educationjustice.net for more information.

Policy

Partner Organizations

EJP engages in research that supports the implementation of thoughtful, evidence-based, ethical policies related to higher education in prison, reentry, and related matters. Much of this work is conducted in partnership with the following Illinois-based initiatives:

Illinois Coalition of Higher Education in Prison (IL-CHEP)

Founded in 2016, IL-CHEP is a coalition made up of educators, students, activists, universities, and others that work toward bringing higher education to Illinois prisons and jails as well as a safer, more just society.

Freedom to Learn Campaign of Illinois (FTL)

Founded by EJP in 2019, FTL is now a part of IL-CHEP. It advocates for statewide policies that support higher education in prison programs and keep them free from interference, censorship, and interruption.

Other Organizations

As we build out our policy work we anticipate creating more opportunities for EJP members to engage in this area.

If you're interested in policy and advocacy, here is a short, incomplete list of organizations in addition to IL-CHEP and FTL, that you may want to learn more about or get involved in:

The Alliance for Higher Education in Prison

The Alliance is a national organization that advocates for the expansion of higher education in prison by supporting instructors, programs, and students. The Alliance operates a prison education ListServ that you can join by filling out this form.

Illinois Prison Project

Through education, advocacy, and direct representation of people incarcerated in Illinois prisons, the Illinois Prison Project works for incarcerated people and their families and helps to create a more humane, just world.

Illinois Justice Project (ILJP)

The ILJP advances policies and practices that reduce violence, decrease prison recidivism, and make the justice system more equitable.

Restore Justice Illinois

Restore Justice Illinois engages in direct legislative advocacy around sentencing, prison conditions, and related issues in Illinois.

D. Internship Program

An internship with EJP offers undergraduates and other students the opportunity to grow as a person and as a professional. Our interns gain insight into social justice issues, meet people with shared interests related to social justice, and learn about the importance of questioning and challenging the criminal justice system and other social injustices.

Additionally, working with EJP provides the opportunity to build a variety of skills that interns will find useful in future career or educational endeavors. Many of our interns leave their EJP internship with enhanced abilities in communication, research, fundraising, data collection and processing, leadership, collaborative skills, cultural competency, and more.

The qualities we seek in an intern are compassion, open-mindedness, critical thinking, and engagement.

We treat our interns as professionals within EJP and expect them to do the same. While every intern's role will require different duties, we do have standards we expect every intern to follow:

- Work three to five hours weekly, based on available work and schedule.
- If you must miss work, communicate this to Operations Director Jamie Hines and the head interns in a clear and timely manner.
- Attend and participate in required events as listed in the intern handbook.
- Be responsive to communication from head interns and EJP staff (both email AND Mango).

- Submit required forms in a timely fashion (this includes but is not limited to Doodle polls, feedback forms, and midterm check-in registration).
- Participate in feedback and evaluation procedures.

In turn, EJP head interns and supervisors strive to create an inclusive, supportive, workplace in order to help interns grow and learn.

EJP offers a variety of internship positions that engage different skill sets and interests. We aim to ensure that our interns have the opportunity to choose a position most related to their personal interests and goals.

Internship application deadlines are March 1 for the Fall semester and October 1 for the Spring. For more information contact Operations Director Jamie Hines directly at info@educationjustice.net.

Twice per semester we offer the opportunity for our interns and supervisors to exchange feedback. These check-ins allow interns to receive comments on their performance and to communicate their needs and observations to the head interns or director of operations.

The first check-ins occur around the midterm of each semester. Interns meet with the head intern for a conversation where they are free to ask questions and get feedback on the progress of their tasks.

The second check-in is more in depth. At the end of each semester, interns are asked to communicate their plans for the following semester and comment on their experiences with EJP thus far.

E. Technical and Support Staff

Data Stewardship Team

EJP's data stewardship team uses a range of methods and approaches to ensure the organization's data is accessible, usable, trustworthy, and secure.

If you're interested in getting involved with the data stewardship team, please contact Shreyasi Biswas at biswshre@gmail.com.

Graphic Design Team

EJP's graphic design team is responsible for the important task of making the information related to EJP accessible and easy to understand. The team takes text and photographs and arranges them with an eye toward aesthetics and strong organization. The result is EJP documents that are informative, visually pleasing, and easy to navigate.

If you're interested in getting involved with the graphic design team, please contact Jamarri Nix at jnix2@illinois.edu.

Office Support Staff

EJP office support staff play an important part in making the organization as a whole run smoothly. They catalog records, documents, and reports; enter data; keep financial records; and coordinate meetings and events, among other tasks.

If you're interested in getting involved with the office support team, please contact Jamie Hines at jlhines@illinois.edu.

Social Media Team

EJP's social media team works to share EJP news and stories to a wider audience around the country and around the world. The team's posts on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook provide social media followers with important updates such as EJP job postings, new programs, collaborations, and calls for entry, as well as information about incarceration and its impacts on individuals and society.

If you're interested in getting involved with the social media team, please contact Natalie Cline at ncline2@illinois.edu.





What Else You Need to Know

Growing within EJP

If you're currently a member of EJP and seeking additional ways to get involved, here are some options. Outside members can find out about opportunities on Mango; EJP students should look for announcements at DCC to learn how to participate in:

- Ad hoc committees on campus and at the prison that plan events such as EJP retreats and convocations.
- Search committees, which have responsibility for managing external job searches, including full-time positions, and must meet multiple times over the course of a month or more.
- Interview committees, which meet with candidates for EJP positions. This is often a one-time obligation.
- Volunteer work at events such as EJP information tables and the EJP Gala.
- We hope everyone who wants to work with EJP is able to find something that interests them and helps them grow.

International Partnerships

As part of our partnership with Wells of Hope, a non-profit organization based in Uganda, we have been writing a reentry guide for that East African country. This work is currently on hold.

Donate

The Education Justice Project depends mightily on individual donors. Please consider supporting our work through a financial contribution.

Follow Us

Another way you can stay connected and support EJP is by liking and following us on social media, where we post frequently about EJP events and other topics or programs that might interest EJP members.

Follow Us Online!

Website: educationjustice.net

Facebook: @educationjustice

Instagram: @ejp_at_il

Twitter: @EJPillinois

As a member of EJP, we encourage you to take advantage of opportunities to develop your skills and interests. Below are some ways of becoming more involved.

Leadership

There are many ways to support EJP while growing as a leader.

Coordinate an EJP Program

Most EJP programs are directed by a coordinator, who is responsible for scheduling, training members, overseeing program evaluation, and promoting the program.

Coordinators play an essential role within EJP, and serving as a coordinator is a valued way to contribute to our work while developing your leadership skills.

Open coordinator positions are listed on the EJP website and also advertised on our Facebook page (@educationjustice) and over Mango. We offer on-site coordinators a \$2,000 stipend each semester. (EJP will occasionally receive a grant to support a particular program and that may allow us, at least temporarily, to pay more to the EJP instructors or coordinators associated with that program.)

Join the Advisory Council

You can learn more about the current Advisory Council members on our website. We accept nominations for this body each Fall. The current nominations chair is Greg Jahiel: g_jahiel@yahoo.com.

Learning at Danville Correctional Center

Attend EJP Convocations

Twice a year, EJP students organize convocations at the prison to which all instructors holding clearance are invited. This year the convocations will fall on Thursday, August 17, 2023, and Thursday, May 23, 2024. Each will begin at 9 am. You're encouraged to attend.

Attend All-Student Meetings

These meetings are held several times each semester. They are opportunities for students and instructors to discuss issues and concerns related to on-site programming, upcoming events, facilities, and more. These meetings are announced in advance and all individuals involved with on-site programming are encouraged to attend.

Attend Special Events

EJP hosts occasional special events at the prison (e.g. symposia or conferences). We strongly encourage EJP students and instructors to attend these events.

For Outside Members

Participate in Open Houses

Once each semester, EJP hosts an open house at DCC. We invite those interested in learning more about EJP's programs, including prospective instructors, donors, and family and friends of current EJP members, to attend. Current EJP members are also welcome to attend and see the classes in action. Dates are not yet scheduled for the 2023–24 academic year.

Attend EJP Lunches

EJP typically hosts weekday lunches in our office. Check our weekly newsletter or EJP calendar for information on when and where. All EJP members are welcome, as are interested friends. Lunches are a good way to meet other people involved with EJP, engage in stimulating conversation about criminal justice, and find out about happenings within the various EJP programs.

Participate in Town Hall Meetings

These gatherings allow us to discuss matters of governance and administration. Questions, comments, and concerns about EJP can be brought to these meetings. (Questions or concerns regarding a particular program should be raised first with the coordinator(s) of that program.) The meetings offer opportunities to learn about ways to become involved with EJP governance, e.g. by joining a committee.

This year, our first town hall will be held on March 20, 2024 at 4:30–6:00 PM CST. It will take place both virtually and in-person.

Sign up for Leadership Training

Attending leadership training events is a great way to develop skills that can be applied to other activities you're involved with. We provide such opportunities to enhance the quality of EJP programs and governance, and as a way of thanking our members for all they do for EJP. Leadership training opportunities are posted on Mango.

Attend or Volunteer for Campus and Community Events

EJP frequently hosts public events (e.g., speakers, workshops, films, and conferences). We strongly encourage EJP members to attend such events because we believe that a deeper understanding of incarceration and reentry will enrich your involvement with EJP, and perhaps prompt you to want to get involved in other initiatives around justice and equity. Go to the EJP calendar, accessible on the homepage of the EJP website, to find event times, dates and locations. Events are also advertised on "EJP This Week," our weekly electronic newsletter.

If you're interested in helping to organize such events or have an idea for an event, please contact the EJP office.



Appendices

EJP Group Commitments

To create a healthy climate for teaching, learning, and growing, we ask EJP members to observe the following group commitments, or to use them as a basis for developing your own occasion-specific group commitments.

1. Respect individuals' opinions and feelings and their willingness to share them.
2. Use "I" statements, e.g. "I think..." or "I believe...."
3. Realize that everyone's experiences differ and try meeting other people where they are.
4. Practice active listening. Listen for understanding, not for judgment.
5. Speak only for yourself and not as a representative of a particular group, e.g. "Latinos believe...."
6. Avoid absolute language, e.g. "All Black men know..." or "It always happens that..." or "everyone knows...."
7. Keep the content of confidential discussions confidential.
8. Don't be afraid to remind others of these group commitments.
9. Disagreements and conflicts are okay.
10. Don't attack speakers for their beliefs or opinions.
11. Asking questions is highly encouraged.
12. Be honest.
13. You have the right not to answer questions or to not offer your opinion.
14. Ask "Are there any additional group commitments we should implement?"

EJP Policies

Language

It is EJP's policy to refer to EJP students as students. Other acceptable terms include: incarcerated people, incarcerated individuals, people, EJP students, and Illinois undergrads.

It's our policy to ask members to say "correctional officer" (CO) rather than "prison guard" when referring to prison security staff, since that's what many of them prefer.

We appreciate that for people who are accustomed to using other words to describe people in prison, it can be hard to adjust to using new terms. If you refer to EJP students

as "inmates," "convicts," or the like, it will likely elicit disapproving looks or surprise from other EJP members. That can be uncomfortable. If this happens, please know that we're not trying to silence you or condemn you; it's simply that within EJP it's unusual to hear those terms.

A healthy way of handling such situations is to address them when they happen. It's fine to stop a conversation and ask, "Did I use the preferred term?" or "I can't remember what the handbook says about this...." We realize we're all still learning.

Avoid Titles

We respectfully request that instructors not ask students to address them as "Dr." Not all EJP instructors have a PhD. We want to avoid creating a sense of hierarchy among our instructors.

"Professor" is also an appropriate title for instructors, as it is gender-neutral and does not imply the attainment of any particular qualification.

Accessibility

Please consider using the following language, or language like it, when you advertise activities and events related to EJP.

"If you will need disability-related accommodations in order to participate in this program/event, or have special dietary needs, please contact [insert appropriate name here]. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your access needs. ADA-accessible doors are located on the west side of the building. We are reachable by the Yellow,

Navy, Blue, Silver, Brown, and Illini bus lines. Our nearby bus stops are Transit Plaza, Wright & Chalmers, and Armory & Wright."

You may also consider adding the following language to your email signature when conducting EJP business:

"If you need any accommodations to fully participate in meetings or events with me, please email me at [enter your email address here]."

1. Research Policy

Note: This policy was written by members of the Research Group in March 2014 and revised in July 2014. Further revisions, proposed by EJP alumni, were approved by a group of EJP alumni at their regular meeting on August 9, 2015.

EJP's mission is to build a model college-in-prison program that demonstrates the positive impacts of higher education upon incarcerated people, their families, the communities from which they come, the host institution, and society as a whole. In pursuit of this mission, EJP members are encouraged to produce scholarship about EJP.

Given the power dynamics inherent in the researcher-participant relationship, this policy aims to protect EJP students and the integrity of the program. It does so by outlining protocols for the approval of research projects and promoting best practices for ethical, reflective, and participatory research.

I. Who is this policy for?

This policy is for any EJP member, including those with clearance who work inside the prison, those without clearance who work our FACE programs, and incarcerated EJP students.

II. Who can access EJP students for research purposes?

EJP members (instructors, students, and others engaged in our work) are encouraged to produce scholarship for both public and scholarly forums. EJP does not provide access to Danville Correctional Center or EJP students

to those who are not already involved in EJP.

We encourage prospective researchers to consider how the restrictions and isolation of the prison context might challenge their ability to build relationships based upon professionalism, integrity, and trust. We view research that enlists incarcerated individuals merely as interviewees and respondents to be further isolating. For this reason, we encourage instructors and other on-site members to create opportunities for EJP students to be co-authors in research and writing projects. Such work could include co-authoring a text, giving students opportunities to author individual papers or particular sections of a larger project, and creating opportunities for students to provide feedback on the scholarship at hand.

III. What should I do first?

If you are (or are about to start) researching and writing about EJP, you should inform Ashton Hoselton, the Policy & Research Director, who can connect you with others who are doing similar work, schedule opportunities for you to share your work with the Research Group, promote your work by adding any citations to EJP's Online list of publications and presentations, and, if you are interested in co-authoring with students, arrange for call passes and meeting space at DCC.

In addition, if you are preparing a proposal for the Institutional Review Board, please see VI, VII, and VIII below. Before you submit it, share your proposal with the EJP director and with the research coordinator before you submit it so they can provide feedback. Once your IRB is

approved, please email a copy to the research coordinator.

Please note that you will not be able to gain IRB approval to work on an EJP-related project without the support (and, ultimately, the signature) of the EJP director.

The director is unlikely to approve any projects that **do not**:

- a. Employ research methods that provide EJP students an opportunity to participate at some level in research design, data-gathering, and analysis of data.
- b. Demonstrate commitment to scrutinizing power relationships at all stages of the research.
- c. Demonstrate value to incarcerated EJP students or incarcerated individuals more generally.

IV. Can I contact EJP alumni for research purposes?

You will not need the signature of the EJP director to contact individuals who have been released, as would be required for interviewing EJP students. However, we ask that researchers not seek to interview released individuals simply to circumvent this requirement. Please be aware that our alumni ask that prospective researchers be clear about the following:

- a. In whose interest is the research being undertaken? Can the researcher demonstrate how the research will have value to the individuals being interviewed or otherwise support their interests?
- b. Are researchers' relationships with their proposed respondents of a parasitic nature? Are they building their

professional careers on the backs of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people's lives?

- c. Is the researcher taking active steps to minimize power imbalances between researcher and respondents?

V. Will EJP screen or censor my writing?

No.

However, we recommend that you share your writing with the Research Group in order to get feedback. The Research Group offers people who are writing about EJP or related topics (e.g., prison education, mass incarceration, violence, crime, prison reform) an opportunity to get feedback on their work from interested peers in a variety of disciplines and areas. Presenters and group members meet monthly over dinner to discuss drafts of conference papers, strategize responses to reviewer suggestions, brainstorm ideas for dissertations, etc. New members are always welcome to present or give feedback. We also ask that you allow relevant EJP personnel to fact check your piece.

However, the director or research coordinator will not screen or censor your writing. We do ask that you go into the research and publication process with your eyes open. If you write something critical of DCC or the Department of Corrections and a state official reads it, there is always a chance that it may affect your status at the prison or EJP's standing with DCC. This statement is not meant to silence you; it is just a reminder to be aware of the potential impacts of publication.

VI. What kind of scholarship might I produce?

Scholarship on EJP includes the following:

- Reflections on your own experiences with EJP (e.g., Agnieszka Tuszynska's blog post for IPRH; Ramon Cabrales' article for the Illinois TESOL newsletter; instructors' talks for the "What I've Learned from Teaching in a Prison" panels at IPRH)
- Collaborative research and writing with EJP students (e.g., Anke Pinkert's Radical Teacher article with EJP students Michael Brawn, Jose Cabrales, and Gregory Donatelli; the conference paper by Maggie Kainulainen and three students, Emmett Sanders, C.R. Hardaway, and Robert Becker, that theorizes EJP's writing center initiative).
- Interpretive, qualitative, and/or quantitative data collection and analyses (see, e.g., Patrick Berry's article in the journal Pedagogy; the evaluation team's survey of EJP students).

See #7 for guidance on whether your project will need to be approved by the Institutional Review Board.

VII. What is the Institutional Review Board (IRB)?

Approval from UIUC's Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a requirement for institutions receiving federal funding. More specifically, the IRB must approve any research involving living humans from whom "(1) data "through intervention or interaction with the individual or (2) identifiable private information" ("Human Subject," IRB Glossary) are obtained.

This applies to research that is "conducted by any faculty, staff, student, employee or agent of the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (UIUC), or otherwise conducted at or sponsored by the UIUC" (IRB Investigator Handbook Part 1a).

To receive IRB approval, researchers must complete a protocol describing their study (including how participants are recruited and selected, consent obtained, and data collected and secured). The IRB is ultimately concerned with the three key ethical principles of the 1979 Belmont Report: "respect for persons" (participants must give informed consent, and additional safeguards must in place to protect people like those who are incarcerated), "beneficence" (researchers must seek to maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms, and effort is made to protect the privacy of participants and confidentiality of data), and "justice" (selection of participants needs to be equitable, and the "burdens and benefits of research are equitably distributed," Bailey, n.p.).

VIII. Do I need to get my project approved by the IRB?

- a. If you are engaged in a project that involves collecting data from living people, such as through observations and field notes, surveys, or interviews, you do need approval from the IRB.
- b. If you are reflecting on your own experiences with EJP, you do not need approval from the IRB.
- c. Creative works and community outreach, like poetry, blog posts, and journalism (e.g. an Amplifier article) do not require IRB if they do not involve data collection.
- d. Simply co-authoring with EJP students or instructors does not require IRB approval, when all authors are reflecting on, and representing, their own experiences. For an example of this, see “Prisoners Teaching ESL,” an article by thirteen students and instructors involved in Language Partners. IRB approval was not necessary for this scholarship.

IX. How do I get IRB approval?

You are responsible for getting approval from the IRB. If you need IRB approval, you have three options:

- Conduct research under EJP’s current IRB
- Submit an addendum to EJP’s IRB
- Submit your own IRB proposal

To discuss your options, contact Rebecca Ginsburg, EJP director. Graduate students should work closely with their own advisors. Whichever option you choose, you will need to complete Online training modules required by the IRB.

X. What are best practices of researching people involved in EJP?

Anonymity v. Authorship: Students and instructors have a right to be anonymous as well as to claim authorship for their experiences. For qualitative research that includes students’ stories, you may want to include language on the consent form that allows students to elect that their real names be used instead of automatically granting pseudonyms.

If students wish to remain anonymous, but might be identifiable to those who live or work at DCC, you will not be able to bring your work to the prison to share. For instance, one EJP member gave all EJP students pseudonyms but then was unable to share the fruits of the research inside DCC because the students, even with pseudonyms, were still identifiable.

Language to Describe EJP Students: We ask that researchers be thoughtful about how incarcerated students are described (e.g., convict v. inmate v. student or incarcerated student). (See the EJP Style Guide for more detail.)

Resources on Participatory Action Research in Prison. PDFs are available.

Fine, M., Roberts, R. A., Torre, M. E., & Upegui, D. (2001). "Participatory Action Research Behind Bars." *Critical Psychology*, 2, 145–157.

Jewkes, Y. (2012). "Autoethnography and Emotion as Intellectual Resources." *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(1), 63–75.

Torre, M. E., Fine, M., Boudin, K., Bowen, I., Clark, J., Hylton, D., ... Upegui, D. (2001). "A Space for Co-constructing Counter Stories Under Surveillance." *Critical Psychology*, 4, 149–166.

Other Recommended Resources

Brydon-Miller, M. (2012). "Addressing the ethical challenges of community-based research." *Teaching Ethics*, 12(2), 157–162.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, L. S. (Eds.) (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research (4th ed)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Kirsch, G. E. (1997). "Multi-vocal texts and interpretive responsibility." *College English*, 59(2), 191–202. ("Multi-vocal texts, then, can easily reassert, however unwittingly, old forms of domination, such as speaking for and despite others" (p. 184).)

Kirsch, G. E. (2005). "Friendship, friendliness, and feminist inquiry." *Signs*, 30, 2163–2172. ("[R]esearchers who strive for the benefits of close, interactive relations with participants must accept the concomitant risks" (p. 2163).

Mertens, D. M., & Ginsberg, P. E. (Eds.) (2009). *The Handbook of Social Research Ethics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Mortensen, P., & Kirsch, G. (1996). *Ethics and representation in qualitative studies of literacy*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Paris, D., & Fisher, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Works Cited:

Bailey, L. R. (n.d.). History and ethical principles. CITI Training Module. [https:// www.citiprogram.org/](https://www.citiprogram.org/)

Shakespeare, T. (1996) "Rules of Engagement: Doing Disability Research." *Disability and Society*, 11, 1, 115–21.

2. Alumni and Family Contact Policy

While these guidelines are written from the perspective of outside EJP members, we ask that everyone involved with EJP please take responsibility for following and upholding them. They are especially relevant for EJP instructors and EJP alumni. They apply with special force to individuals on parole. EJP's ability to continue working with IDOC depends on strict observation of these guidelines. Thank you.

"Alumni" refers to formerly incarcerated EJP students who have been released. "Family members" refers to family members of active EJP students. "Friends" refers to close friends of active EJP students. "EJP member" refers to unincarcerated EJP staff and personnel, whether paid or unpaid, irrespective of their clearance status.

- EJP members should meet with EJP alumni, family members, and friends, whether face-to-face or by phone, for professional purposes only. Examples of such purposes include: organizing EJP-sponsored events and activities, attending educational programs (e.g. a campus lecture), and interactions that form part of the EJP member's professional responsibilities (e.g. writing a letter of recommendation for an EJP alumnus).
- If contact beyond the above occurs, the EJP member should inform the EJP office immediately.
- The EJP office offers some reentry support services, such as setting up an email account, accessing U of I transcripts, and

helping with college applications. Please do not offer to assist individual alumni upon their release. Instead, refer them to the EJP office. If you have information or connections that might be of particular use to a specific EJP alumnus, you are welcome to work with the EJP office in helping that alumnus access those resources. This policy is motivated by several concerns. We want:

- all EJP alumni to receive similar reentry support in a fair and transparent manner
- to ensure that EJP members do not feel any pressure to assist with reentry
- to make sure that alumni get the best possible reentry support, from experienced staff
- importantly, to comply with IDOC restrictions against fraternization.
- No loaning or taking money, cars, subleasing houses, commercial ventures, etc., between EJP alumni, family members, friends of current EJP students, family members of EJP alumni, or friends of EJP alumni and EJP members.
- For those with DCC clearance, do not engage in casual sharing of family news at the prison or in any other behavior that might give the impression that EJP alumni-member interactions are not controlled and professional. Also, please respect EJP student privacy.

- Don't share information about specific, identifiable family members with EJP students, non-EJP friends or colleagues, campus students, or anyone else without permission from the family member.
- Do not engage in personal (i.e. not professional) written correspondence with family members or alumni. This applies to all forms of correspondence, including email, texting, postal mail, and other. If you receive a personal letter, please report it to the EJP office immediately.
- Do not 'friend' EJP alumni or EJP students on Facebook. This rule applies even beyond parole. The Illinois Department of Corrections takes this policy very seriously, and so do we. Even if you don't mind your students following you on Facebook, your EJP colleagues may, and those that are connected to you on Facebook will not be able to control how information travels on the web. Please be aware that IDOC staff patrol social media accounts.

3. Conflict Resolution & Grievance Procedures

Below is the draft policy as of **3/23/2016**. Please consider it binding until further notice.

Brief Overview

The Education Justice Project encourages a culture of mutual care and support for all members. "Members" in this context includes incarcerated EJP students, EJP staff, instructors, program volunteers, and all who have applied to and been accepted to EJP programs.

In addition, individuals who have not gone through a formal admission process but who are involved with EJP are covered by this policy. It is not necessary to be employed by the University of Illinois or a student at the University of Illinois to be covered.

As a unit of the Department of Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership (EPOL) within the College of Education (COE) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, EJP members are covered by the University of Illinois' College of Education's Grievance Policy as detailed by the College of Education Bylaws.

As a reflection of EJP's mission and values relating to gentleness, openness, and En Lak'esh (mutual respect and recognition), EJP members may also make use of restorative circle processes to address grievances and conflict among themselves.

Apart from the COE Grievance Policy and restorative processes for addressing grievances, we encourage members to make use of additional resources available through the University of Illinois and outlined in this document. Wherever possible, EJP encourages members to share any concerns or grievances with their coordinators, who have direct responsibility for managing each EJP program, as a first step.

Reporting a Grievance

The Education Justice Project's Grievance Committee is a resource available to all EJP members. Grievances can be reported directly to EJP's Grievance Committee members, co-chairs Gus Wood and Greg Jahiel, via email. Please note that members can bring concerns to their coordinator, their coordinator's supervisor, and the EJP director.

While EJP promotes a restorative approach where possible, some grievances or conflicts may warrant different kinds of support.

Members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the resources outlined here to assist with resolving a conflict or addressing a grievance and select the pathway that they deem most appropriate or desirable. The following outlines procedures for accessing the COE Grievance Policy, restorative processes, and additional resources accessible to members. If you have additional questions, please contact the EJP Grievance Committee. Obviously, those subject to IDOC must employ prison procedures.

COE Grievance Policy

EJP members can report a grievance to the College of Education's College Grievance Committee as outlined by the COE Bylaws. The College Grievance Committee receives reports of grievances and keeps a record of the committee's investigations, deliberations, and recommendations to be forwarded to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Any matter coming before the CGC shall be held confidential unless the grievant and the committee agree otherwise. To file a grievance, the student shall submit a letter to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs stating the reasons for the grievance and the remedy that is sought.

Restorative Circles

Restorative circles are dialogic processes that bring together those who have been affected by conflict or an incident and are usually held in a circle format, providing every person with an opportunity to be heard and express feelings in a safe environment. All participants engage in dialogue with the aim of mutual understanding, community accountability, and repairing any harm that has been done. All those impacted by the harm have the choice of participating voluntarily. All participants will have initial meetings with the circle facilitator(s) to understand the process before a circle takes place. To request a restorative circle, contact the EJP Grievance Committee to make arrangements.

Additional Resources

EPOL Department Head

EJP members can address concerns directly to Yoon Pak, Head of the Department of Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership of which EJP is a unit, by email, phone, or written letter.

Email:

yoonpak@illinois.edu

US Mail:

Yoon Pak

College of Education

1310 S. 6th St., Champaign, IL 61820

Campus Mail:

M/C 708

Office for Access and Equity

The Office for Access and Equity is a campus unit that facilitates compliance in the areas of diversity, equity, and access. To submit a report of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct, or to inquire about a reasonable accommodation, [click here](#). Additional resources are Online at www.wecare.illinois.edu.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives

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

We believe that a model college-in-prison program, or any educational institution, should support each individual's ability to work and learn in an atmosphere of respect and dignity.

We are, accordingly, moving forward with actionable steps to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion within EJP, and foster a culture of appreciation for these values. This action plan provides details on our current goals and initiatives, their planning and implementation, and how they will be communicated with EJP members.

For more information on EJP's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives, please contact dei@educationjustice.net, or Julia Spielmann, coordinator: juliaspielmann0@gmail.com.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Members, 2023–24

Julia Spielmann, coordinator

Members:

Amber Dunse

Rebecca Ginsburg

Alina Loewenstein

Andrea Miller

Additional members are welcome!

For more information, contact the team: dei@educationjustice.net
or Julia: juliaspielmann0@gmail.com

What are Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

Diversity

Diversity as a practice is the process of fostering acceptance and respect for the uniqueness of each individual. Emphasis is placed on understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance of differing identities to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions contained within each individual. The practice also includes honoring individuals' differing ways of knowing, including their experiences, traditions, insights, thoughts, ideas, and philosophies.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice of including or being included within a group or structure. Emphasis is placed on the honoring of all identities and equitable treatment. Consistent and critical efforts are made to recognize and interrogate bias and to mitigate its negative effects. The practice of inclusion works to transform the conditions that create discrimination and prejudice. Practicing inclusion also involves authentic and empowered participation, a genuine sense of belonging and a culture of connectedness that is transparent, communicative, engaging, collaborative, and fosters professional growth.

Equity

Equity is the practice of recognizing that different individuals and groups have different needs and starting positions, largely as a result of historical and systemic forms of oppression and marginalization. Practicing equity involves providing different resources to different people, based on their needs, with the goal that everyone will arrive at a comparable and just outcome. An equity mindset is in contrast to an equality mindset, which assumes that everyone will benefit from the same supports to meet their needs. In an equitable system, a person's group membership does not predict life outcomes, and outcomes for all groups are improved.

Making Virtual Meetings More Inclusive

Even before the pandemic, we frequently communicated via teleconference within EJP. Now just about all interactions are happening over Zoom. Below are some tips for running mixed meetings, when some individuals are in person and some are online:

- Providing an agenda ahead of time makes it easier for everyone to keep track of what's happening.
- Take time for introductions and check-ins.
- Regularly stop and check that virtual participants can hear, follow the dialogue, and make contributions.
- On phone calls, ask each participant to identify themselves before talking.
- Always thank everybody for participating and remind people that their perspectives are valued.
- We have prepared a tip sheet for operating Zoom meetings. You can access it [here](#). The suggestions include:
 - Before the meeting, invite participants to consider how they want their names to be displayed, including whether they want to include their pronouns or pronunciation guides.
 - Consider whether asking everyone to mute themselves will be conducive to the atmosphere you're trying to establish.
 - Have different ways for participants to speak up, e.g. chat, raising hand, reaction keys. If you're hosting a hybrid meeting, you can find EJP's guide on accessible meetings [here](#).

EJP's conference call line is (605) 313-4820, Code: 604965. Please let Jamie Hines know if you have a conference call scheduled, since we can host only one conference at a time. Contact Jamie to arrange a Zoom conference with EJP's Zoom account.

EJP's Critical Conversations Initiative

This EJP initiative does not relate directly to incarceration. Instead, it speaks to our commitment to creating healthy relationships and engaging one another with respect. It acknowledges the differential in power and privilege among EJP members, not only between incarcerated and unincarcerated, but also between graduate students and faculty members, and more. We strive to be intentional and direct in our efforts to create a community in which all members feel respected and heard. It is a difficult undertaking, and worth pursuing.

After a series of focus groups and meetings, EJP outside members and students agreed jointly in July 2013 to implement what was then called a “critical climate initiative” as a means of moving toward a healthy working and learning environment with EJP. It includes the use of EJP Group Commitments, stating our explicit commitment to addressing issues surrounding EJP materials such as this handbook offering EJP members the opportunity to participate in process groups, and more.

As part of this initiative, each year we select a different text for EJP members to read as a community. Topic choices for this year were offered by DEI team members and voted on by EJP members and alumni with the majority selecting to discuss mental health. This text provides the opportunity for us to engage in difficult dialogues around sensitive and important topics. All EJP members (anyone who is currently active in EJP, including interns, instructors, outside members, program coordinators, and full- and part-time staff) are required to attend at least one Critical Conversations Initiative exercise each year. Below, you will find the original language of our adoption of our Critical Conversations Initiative. On page 68 please find materials for our 2023–24 Critical Conversations topic, which is mental health.

2023–24 Critical Conversations Discussion

All EJP members are required to attend at least one Critical Conversations Initiative exercise each year. Attending a discussion of the language reading counts as meeting this requirement.

Dates and details of campus discussions are on the EJP calendar and below.

Fall 2023

October 30	10:00–11:30 AM CST
November 29	12:00–1:30 PM CST
December 12	2:00–3:30 PM CST

Spring 2024

February 29	10:00–11:30 AM CST
March 27	12:00–1:30 PM CST
April 18	2:00–3:30 PM CST
May 6	5:30–7:00 PM CST

Discussions will also be scheduled for DCC.

Critical Conversations 2023/2024: Mental Health

The Critical Conversations topic this year is **mental health**. It was selected by EJP students during Spring 2023 and we look forward to discussing this topic together! In preparation for these conversations, we are asking inside and outside EJP members to read a selection of short articles on mental health.

What is mental health?

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships, and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community, and socio-economic development.

Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. It exists on a complex continuum, which is experienced differently from one person to the next, with varying degrees of difficulty and distress. There are potentially very different social and clinical outcomes.

[Source: World Health Organization (2022): <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>]

Please note that this selection of readings is not intended to represent all perspectives that exist on this topic. We expect and encourage members to bring their own additional thoughts, experiences, and perspectives to the Critical Conversations.

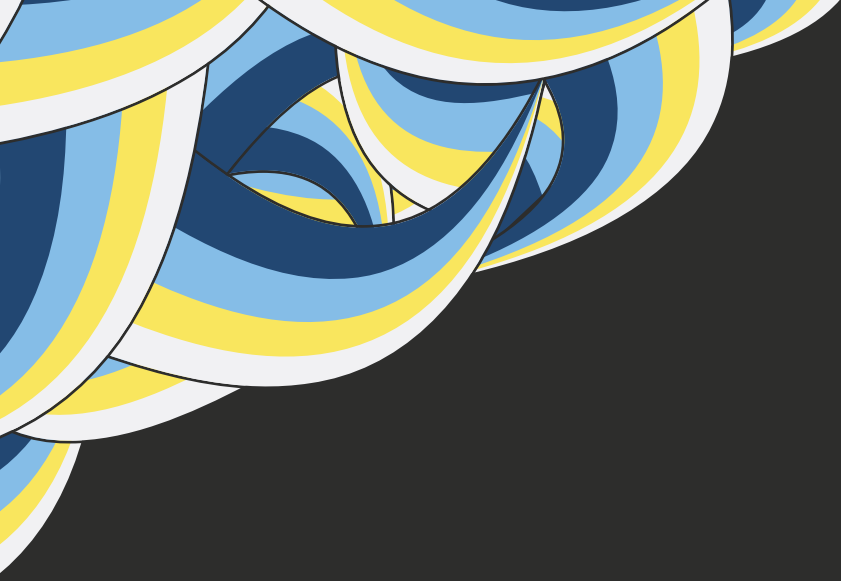
Introduction to terms and concepts: <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

Social determinants of mental health: <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/August-2020/Ways-We-Can-Address-the-Social-Determinants-of-Mental-Health>

Mental health stigma: <https://www.mcleanhospital.org/essential/lets-face-it-no-one-wants-talk-about-mental-health>

Mental health and incarceration: <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/05/13/mentalhealthimpacts/>





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