

REENTRY CAMPUS NEWS

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ISSUE 1 | FEBRUARY 2021



WELCOME TO THE REENTRY CAMPUS PROGRAM!

We are thrilled to call you a member of our community. To have you by our side as we provide the formerly incarcerated an affordable pathway to post-secondary education is something we are incredibly grateful for. Thank you, and enjoy the first issue of our newsletter!

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
- Nelson Mandela



HIGHLIGHTS

- On September 1st 2020, RCP opened its doors on a new office space specifically designed for returning citizens and those who are struggling with criminal backgrounds and employment. This space was brought into existence by those who have been formerly incarcerated coming together with those who have worked at the highest levels of our criminal justice system and is ran and directed by individuals who have been formerly incarcerated, gone on to become successful, and are all working together to help and assist those who are coming after them.
- Located at 500 Broad Street, 1C, Providence, RI 02907, we are open 9am-5pm in the heart of South Providence where more than 30% of individuals who are released from prison come home to, making us highly accessible. (See images on page one)
- Drop in services include but not limited to: College Application Assistance, Financial Aid Assistance, Tutoring, Resume Help, Employment Assistance, Computer Lab Services, & DSST testing center access.
- RCP was approved as a DANTES testing site, which allows our students to take exams to get approved for college credit by Ace at over 1900 colleges and universities nationwide.

MESSAGE TO THE READER

Board of Directors

- Lisa Holley (President)
- Imam Abdul Latif
- Dr. Taino Palermo
- Stephanie M Cruz
- Commander Tom Verdi
- Eileen Hayes
- Heather Gaydos
- Brenda Dan-Messier
- Judy Tizel
- Mary Louise Joseph
- Cherie Cruz
- Teresa Foley
- Robert Gessman
- Peter Slom

For far too long, there has been a huge disconnect between the educational programming that happens behind the walls of prisons and the affordable access to it upon release.

We have fought to ban the box, got some states to restore our right to vote, and amended some of the archaic laws around probation and parole. Yet, in many institutions of higher learning, we are still not welcome. Perhaps due to the stigma surrounding us as second class citizens who are not worthy of second chances.

It is one thing to be locked up in prison where everyone is pretty much on the same playing field, but it is another thing entirely to be locked out of society even after having paid our debt to it.

Here is our opportunity to break the cycle and not only get out of prison, but stay out of prison. Here is our chance to make right of our wrongs, and make a difference in someone's life, beginning with our own. The pathway has been paved, the doorway has been opened, and now it is up to us to walk through it.

More Education = More Money = More Freedom of choices that having an education brings about!

We are worthy of so much more than we give ourselves credit for sometimes. If there is any debt to society that we owe, now that we have served our time, it is to ourselves, and to the individuals who are coming out and coming up after us.

Enter here boldly & blazing, and know for sure that you are not alone.



*James A. Monteiro
Founder & Director, Reentry Campus Program*

HUB FOR THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED



BY JAMES MONTEIRO, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR

Across our nation there are approximately 85,000 people enrolled in postsecondary education and certification programs behind the walls of our nation's prisons. However due to time constraints and space limitations, most who start these programs while incarcerated are not be able to finish before they are released. Up until recently, little has been done to connect programming that is happening behind prison walls, to educational opportunities upon release.

Formerly incarcerated individuals successfully worked together with RI corrections officials, law enforcement, education experts, community supporters, foundations and the business community, to create the Reentry Campus Program (RCP) Hub for previously incarcerated individuals who are looking to finish their education journey started behind prison walls.

Upon entry into the RCP Hub, these individuals are met by RCP Justice Peers who have previous experience with the criminal justice system and have gone on to become successful. These individuals serve as mentors, standing ready to assist with all aspects of the college application process. This includes everything from advisement, acquiring transcripts, filling out the FAFSA, resumes, cover letters, and job searches. Our Justice Peers are also trained as Peer Recovery Coach Specialists, able to help individuals navigate mental health issues and connect them to related services. These services we connect our students to are always trauma informed with an asset-based approach to healing and reconciliation.

RCP OFFICE HOURS

DAYS:
MONDAY - FRIDAY

TIMES:
9:00AM - 5:00PM

LOCATION:
500 BROAD ST,
UNIT 1C
PROVIDENCE, RI, 02907



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM NEWS: PELL GRANT REINSTATEMENT

By Abigail Lucy Terry, RCP Data & Communications Manager

Time has shown us that there were many mistakes made in the overzealous 'tough on crime' era, one notable mistake being the 1994 Crime Bill that included a provision banning students in prison from being eligible to apply to receive Pell Grants. However, the currently incarcerated are one step closer to having the tools necessary to 'break the cycle' after re-expanding the eligibility of Pell Grants to include the incarcerated, as congress recently did on December 21, 2020. Finally after a **26 year ban**, this legislation once again allows the currently incarcerated admittance into the Pell Grant applicant pool.

For those who aren't familiar, Pell Grants are a subsidy that the American federal government provides for students who need it to go to college. The Pell Grant is named after Rhode Island senator Claiborne Pell and offered only to students "who exhibit a great financial need" and have not yet earned their first bachelor's degree. Administered by the United States Department of Education, students awarded these grants are allowed to use them at any of the approximately 5,300 participating post-secondary education institutions across the U.S.

As the failures of America's system of mass incarceration grow more and more unignorable to the general public, many are beginning to ask, "**What will break the cycle?**" At least one of the answers to this important question is clear: Education. This recent development in Pell Grant accessibility means the currently incarcerated have access to a powerful tool proven to interrupt the cycles that led to them becoming incarcerated in the first place. The potential positive impact of this development on both the incarcerated community and beyond is limitless, with success stories abound from those who have participated in correctional education programs and their communities. For the nearly 2.3 million currently incarcerated citizens of this country, hope takes the form of financial aid.

Building a career that you can be proud of and support your family with is as American as apple pie, but to achieve this, a college degree is practically a requirement. But for the incarcerated access to this American dream of education is out of reach, more often than not. This promise of opportunity to "break the cycle" is so far out of reach in fact, that it is arguably counterproductive to one of the main philosophical goals of our criminal justice system; which is of course to eliminate (or at least reduce) recidivism with rehabilitation. Studies from organizations like the RAND Corporation, show that **those who participate in any type of educational program while incarcerated are almost twice as likely to not recidivate** compared to their counterparts who did not participate in any type of educational program while serving time. In addition to being far more cost-effective for the taxpayer, evidence from this study goes on to suggest correctional education programs increase a participants likelihood of gaining and maintaining employment after incarceration.

This recent development in Pell Grant accessibility is certainly exciting. But there is still more work to be done in expanding the ease of access to these programs as well as optimizing the success of students participating in them. For example, the same RAND Corporation study mentioned above asserts that students who benefitted from access to "computer-assisted instruction" experienced accelerated learning in more than one subject area- and what could possibly be the argument for not doing everything we can to help non-traditional students succeed?

An overwhelming number of currently incarcerated individuals will eventually be released. So that raises the question: How do we want them to return to our communities? The answer is educated. Providing meaningful programming that leads to jobs is statistically proven, impactful recidivism prevention and good for the economy.

Have any questions? Looking for ways to get involved? Don't hesitate to contact us through our website or social media!

SOURCE: 1: Davis, Lois M., Robert Bozick, Jennifer L. Steele, Jessica Saunders, and Jeremy N. V. Miles, Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults, RAND Corporation, RR-266-BJA, 2013.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Too often the previously incarcerated become wholly defined by their criminal justice involvement, even long after they have completed their sentences and paid their debt to society. So, in an effort to help our previously incarcerated brothers and sisters walk about the world prejudice-free, with the same social and professional freedoms as someone who has never seen the inside of a cell, we are sharing some truly unique content with you. The transcripts shared in this series-titled 'Previously Incarcerated Student Conversations'- will be interviews with individuals who are/were Reentry Campus clients and dedicated students. Some will be from anonymous sources and some will specify a name. Some have graduated, some are still working on their degrees, some have gone on to start successful businesses, and there are plenty of stories in between.

Each conversation shared in this series will feature unique, personal stories that accurately illustrates the challenges of healthy reentry. It is our hope that the perspectives and experiences shared in this series will help to evolve your understanding of the realities of the previously incarcerated and the urgency of investing in correctional education in Rhode Island, and beyond.

Read the first installment on our website's blog! In the meantime, lets check up on another past student to see how they're doing post-graduation:



ALEXIS MORALES

RWU Case Management Certification

Alexis is set to graduate from Roger Williams University in the fall of 2021 with a certification in Case Management. He is now employed by RI Hospital as a peer recovery specialist assisting individuals struggling with substance abuse issues.



MERISSA PICCOLIO

Amos House Carpentry
Certification

Merissa completed the Amos House Carpentry Program, and is now employed by Amos House, owns her own home, and recently started her own construction business.



THOMAS HARMON

RWU Case Management
Certification

Tommy is on track to graduate in fall 2021 with a certificate in Case Management. He recently obtained employment at Amos House as the manager of the fatherhood house.

APPROVED!

RCP IS GRANTED APPROVAL TO ADMINISTER PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS AND DSST EXAMS TO OUR STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE CREDIT



We have recently been approved to be a testing site for DSST Exams!
This is a *huge* win for our students!

"The nationally recognized DSST Credit-by-Exam Program gives students the opportunity to get college credit for learning acquired outside the traditional classroom. With more than 30 exams in college subject areas such as Social Sciences, Math, Applied Technology, Business, Physical Sciences, and Humanities, DSST exams shorten the pathway to graduation while reducing college costs. Prior learning assessment tools like DSST Exams offer students a cost-effective, time-saving way to use knowledge acquired outside of the classroom (from personal research, on-the-job training, independent study, work or military field experience) to accomplish their educational goals. Over 1,500 colleges and universities recognize the DSST program and award college credit for passing scores. The American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT) has evaluated and recommended college credit for all 30+ DSST exams."

Come in, get more information, and schedule an exam today!



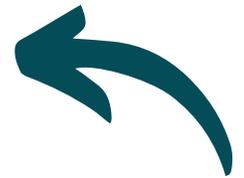
REENTRY CAMPUS STUDENT OFFICE HOURS

DATES:
Monday - Friday

TIMES:
9:00am - 5:00pm

LOCATION:
500 Broad St, Unit 1C,
Providence, RI, 02907

Case managers are standing by to assist individuals with college prep, registration, applying for FAFSA, stabilization, and registration. We have a computer lab for individuals to drop in and do work, along with Student Support Specialists there to assist with resumes, cover letters, and applications.



*The Outside of
Our New Office
& Student Hub!*

COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

Housing, Substance Abuse, Mental Health services & Prisoner Health education.

- **Amos House, (401) 272-0220:**
A nonprofit organization that serves the homeless, unemployed, and those who are living in poverty. They offer food assistance, job training, shelter housing, emergency intervention services, cultural programs, and more.
- **Bridgemark Addiction Recovery Services, (401) 781-2700:**
A nonprofit addiction treatment facility that provides a "safe and stable environment" for individuals to "learn and maintain a sober, drug and alcohol-free lifestyle with a sense of responsibility and freedom from judgment."
- **MAP Behavioral Health Services, (401) 785-0050:**
A private rehab that specializes in the treatment of alcoholism, opioid addiction, mental health and substance abuse, and dual diagnosis.
- **942 'STOP' Hotline, (401) 942-7867:**
A hotline staffed by licensed chemical dependency counselors open from 9am to 9pm, seven days a week, that connects Rhode Islanders with treatment and recovery support.
- **The Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights:**
The center seeks to "act as a hub for the innovative correctional health research and programming occurring at The Miriam Hospital and other research hospitals in RI and around the country." Learn more about "the health and human rights of justice-involved populations" on their website, www.prisonerhealth.org

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!



THE CLANEIL FOUNDATION

... AND READERS LIKE YOU!