

FACT SHEET: **Ban the Box in Higher Education**

The **Education from the Inside Out Coalition** opposes the criminal history screening of applicants during the admissions process at colleges and universities. At best, these screenings serve no legitimate public safety purpose and at their worst, threaten to roll back the gains of *Brown vs. Board of Education* and violate the spirit of educational opportunity for all.

In a national survey of higher education institutions and their use of criminal history screenings, the Center for Community Alternatives found that, among responding colleges, 66 percent of schools collect criminal justice information.ⁱ There is no evidence that schools that are not collecting criminal history data are less safe than those that are and there is no evidence that screening for criminal history records makes campuses more safe.

Criminal History Screenings Exacerbate Existing Racial Disparities

Racial disparities in our nation's criminal and justice systems have been documented at every stage of processing and for every type of crime.ⁱⁱ As a result of these disparities the use of criminal history screenings disproportionately impacts applicants of color.

College and Universities Lack Consistent Screening Policies and Procedures

Just six percent of schools responding to a survey conducted by the Center for Community Alternatives report that their admissions process is identical for applicants with and without a criminal record. 47.1% of higher education institutions lack a written policy regarding the admissions of applicants with a criminal record.

Requirements vary by institution:

- 90% of institutions require a letter of explanation
- 63.2% require a letter from a corrections official
- 54.2% require a personal interview
- 38.5% require completion of community supervision
- 15.2% of respondents require applicants to submit rap sheets to institutions

State University of New York (SUNY)

SUNY has a longstanding policy of criminal history screenings, including its online SUNY Application Service, where disclosure of conviction history is a required if the applicant it be considered for admissions (The Box).ⁱⁱⁱ

Certain SUNY campuses actually require applicants to obtain, at their own expense, their criminal history records from the NY State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). These records contain sealed, confidential information, including dismissed charges, and youthful offender adjudications.

Nevertheless, failure to submit these records, which SUNY has no statutory right to access, will prevent admission. Furthermore, in July 2013, SUNY issued a policy FAQ that encourages all campuses to require applicants to obtain their own DCJS record and submit it to the admissions office. This is a huge step backwards, since it encourages schools that were not asking for criminal history records, to do so.

Higher Education Reduces Recidivism¹:

Nationally, 67.8% of formerly incarcerated individuals are likely to return to prison within three years of release. According to a study by the Texas Department of Justice, the recidivism rate drops dramatically with successful participation in higher education:

- **Masters:** less than 1%
- **Baccalaureates:** 5.6%
- **Associates:** 13.7%

Increasing Access to Higher Education Pays Off

The value of higher education is clear. Higher education:

- Improves physical and mental health^{iv}
- Increases employment rate^{vi}
- Decreases reliance on public assistance^{vii}
- Elevates quality of life for children^v
- Strengthens communities
- Reduces the overall cost re-incarceration

The Education from the Inside Out Coalition is a nonpartisan collaborative of advocates, led by the College and Community Fellowship, JustLeadershipUSA and the Center for Community Alternatives. Our mission is to remove barriers to higher education funding facing students in prisons, both in New York State and nationwide.



THE COLLEGE & COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP

College and Community Fellowship (CCF) is unique among organizations aimed at helping people reclaim their lives after criminal conviction. Many programs try to address the basic needs of people returning to the community after conviction and prison, but only CCF guides them through the stages of higher education while promoting their leadership, self-advocacy, artistic expression, civic participation and long-term economic security. We see beyond reentry. We see limitless possibilities for our participants, their families and their communities.

Visit www.collegeandcommunity.org to learn more.



THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVES

The Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) is a leader in the field of community-based alternatives to incarceration and reentry. CCA's mission is to promote reintegrative justice and a reduced reliance on incarceration through advocacy, services and public policy development in pursuit of civil and human rights.

CCA's work takes it into the neglected places of America – its ghettos and prisons – the places that many prefer to keep secret. CCA is committed to its responsibility to speak out, not only for progressive alternatives to the criminal justice system but also against those policies and practices that create barriers for people with criminal history records to personal development, transformation, and reintegration back into the community in a healthy, productive and fulfilling way.

Visit www.communityalternatives.org to learn more.



JUSTLEADERSHIPUSA

JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA) is dedicated to cutting the US prison population in half by the year 2030 while reducing crime. JLUSA empowers people most affected by incarceration to drive policy reform.

Visit www.justleadershipusa.org to learn more.

ⁱ <http://www.communityalternatives.org/pdf/Reconsidered-criminal-hist-recs-in-college-admissions.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.communityalternatives.org/pdf/Reconsidered-criminal-hist-recs-in-college-admissions.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/application-forms/suny_app_worksheet.pdf

^{iv} Tracy and Johnson. Review of Various Outcome Studies Relating Prison Education to Reduced Recidivism. (State of Texas: Windham School System, June 1994).

^v Eric F. Dubow, Paul Boxer, and L. Rowell Huesmann, "Long-term effects of parents' education on children's educational and occupational success: Mediation by family interactions, child aggression, and teenage aspirations," *Merrill Palmer Q* (Wayne State Univ Press) 55, no. 3 (2009), 224-249.

^{vi} http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND_RR266.pdf

^{vii} <http://www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/learningreducerecidivism.pdf>