



The College and Community Fellowship  
JustLeadershipUSA  
The Center for Community Alternatives

## **FACT SHEET: The REAL Act and Pell Grant Restoration**

The **Education from the Inside Out Coalition** supports the Restoring Education and Learning (REAL) Act (H.R.2521), federal legislation that would eliminate the 1994 ban on Pell Grant eligibility on incarcerated persons so that they may obtain college financial aid through Pell Grants for postsecondary education programs.

### **Historical Context**

The 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act dismantled higher education in prison by eliminating incarcerated students' eligibility for Pell Grants.

- From 1994-5 to 1997-8, the availability of in-prison postsecondary education programs in all correctional institutions declined from 82.6 percent to 54.9 percent.
- From 1994-5 to 1997-8, the percentage of students taking in-prison postsecondary education programs declined from 7.3 percent to 3.8 percent.<sup>i</sup>

Providing access to higher education has a ripple effect that extends far beyond the rehabilitation of incarcerated people. Higher education positively impacts society by reducing recidivism, increasing public safety and strengthening communities.

### **Incarceration without Education is a Bad Investment**

Nationally, corrections cost \$40 billion each year.<sup>ii</sup> One in every 100 adults in the America is in jail or prison.<sup>iii</sup> More than 2/3 of incarcerated people are re-arrested for a new offense within three years of their release,<sup>iv</sup> a clear indication that current correctional policies are failing.

Extensive research literature has indicated that education reduces recidivism, thus lowering incarceration costs. For every dollar invested in correctional education programs, reincarceration costs are reduced by \$4 to \$5 during the first three years post-release.<sup>v</sup>

### **Increasing Access to Higher Education Pays Off**

The value of higher education is clear. Higher education:

- Improves physical and mental health
- Increases employment rate
- Decreases reliance on public assistance
- Elevates quality of life for children
- Strengthens communities
- Reduces taxpayer expenditures on prison.

## Restoring Pell Grant Eligibility in Prison Will:

- **Reduce Recidivism:** Many people leave prison unskilled and undereducated, both factors that correlate powerfully to recidivism rates, leaving them unprepared for life on the outside. Research has shown that incarcerated individuals who participated in correctional education programs were 43 percent less likely to recidivate than those who did not.<sup>vi</sup>
- **Save money:** In 1994, at its highest rate of in-prison usage, awards to incarcerated students represented 1/10 of 1% of total grant awards. The cost of providing a college degree to an incarcerated student is \$2000 to \$3782<sup>vii</sup> while the cost of incarcerating a person for 1 year is \$31,307.
- **Strengthen Underserved Communities:** Formerly incarcerated people are frequently released to communities that have little to no capacity to provide them with productive employment or reentry assistance. With ever-increasing prison sentences and recidivism rates, incarcerated people are released without the essential tools necessary for reintegration into society.
- **Increase Employment:** Higher education for incarcerated people is valuable in a society where postsecondary credentials are increasingly necessary to gain access to living wage jobs. Researchers at the RAND Corporation found that incarcerated individuals participating in correctional education programming also had a 13 percent higher chance of finding employment post release.<sup>viii</sup>
- **Reduce Poverty:** Success in higher education in prison carries far beyond prison walls. More than 50% of incarcerated people have children. When parents participate in postsecondary education the likelihood their children will go to college increases, creating more opportunities for multiple generations to climb out of poverty.<sup>ix</sup>

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](http://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](http://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](http://www.justleadershipusa.org) to learn more.

<sup>i</sup> Tewksbury, Richard and Jon Marc Taylor (1996) 'Eligibility for students in postsecondary correctional education programs', *Federal Probation* 60(3): 60-3; Tewksbury, Richard, David J. Erickson and Jon Marc Taylor (2000) 'Opportunities lost: The consequences of eliminating Pell Grant eligibility for correctional education students', *Journal of Offender Education* 31(1/2): 43-56.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.ncsl.org/documents/cj/managingcorrectionscosts.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs\\_assets/2008/one20in20100pdf.pdf](http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2008/one20in20100pdf.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rprts05p0510.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.rand.org/news/press/2013/08/22.html>

<sup>vi</sup> [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND\\_RR266.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND_RR266.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> National Association of State Budget Officers, "2009 State Expenditure Report," National Association of State Budget Officers

<sup>viii</sup> [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND\\_RR266.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND_RR266.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> 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.