**Establishing Successful Postsecondary Academic Programs;
A Practical Guide**

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Abstract

In the current economic climate it is more crucial than ever to select federal spending projects which are visionary as well as cost-effective. Saving money today may well cost money tomorrow. Such is the case with correctional education postsecondary programming. Selling vocational or trade-training for offenders to the general public is much easier than the liberal arts academic degree track. However, the benefits of such academic programming are well-documented. States continue to seek effective programming. Simultaneously, federal funding for postsecondary education in prisons (Community and Transition Training for Incarcerated Individuals Program) was eliminated in FY 2012. As states consider postsecondary providers and as correctional education leaders and policy-makers begin to re-frame postsecondary funding for prisons, this presents an ideal time for outlining steps to establishing these academic programs. This practical guide emanates from three years of conducting and observing research and implementation of such programming.

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The Benefits of Postsecondary Education in Correctional Institutions

A large body of research has documented the relationship between participation in prison educational programs and reduced rates of recidivism, post-release employment and education, and other public cost savings, such as reduced criminal justice costs and reduced reliance on welfare and other public programs. Further, several studies have documented substantial long-term public cost savings associated with correctional education including: higher levels of employment increasing the tax base; wage-earners supporting families resulting in a fewer citizens reliant on social welfare programs; and ending the cycle of intergenerational poverty, illiteracy, and crime.   (Batiuk, McKeever, & Wilcox, 2005; Bazos & Hausman, 2004; Coley & Barton, 2006; Erisman & Contardo, 2005; Fine et al, 2001; Gaes, 2008; MTC Institute, 2003; Steurer, Smith, & Tracy, 2001). For example, the *Three State Recidivism Study,* conducted by the Correctional Education Association, concluded that participation in correctional education programs reduced the probability of subsequent incarceration by 29% (Steurer, Smith, & Tracy, 2001).

Beyond the social and public cost benefits associated with reduced recidivism, correctional education has great potential to improve the social and economic situations of inmates and their families. Inmates who regularly attend and complete classes while incarcerated have the potential to acquire skills that prepare them for employment, to gain a sense of accomplishment and success, to become lifelong learners, and to avoid committing further crime. Families of incarcerated men and women may have histories of poverty, illiteracy, and criminality and more than half of state and federal prisoners have at least one child under 18 (L.I.S., Inc., 2002). Offenders who enroll in educational programming have an opportunity to demonstrate positive behaviors to their families and to serve as positive role models to family and children.

While postsecondary programming represents a small proportion of correctional education programs, a growing body of literature suggests that participation in these programs is associated with lower recidivism rates and other post release outcomes, such as higher rates of employment and increased earnings (Adams et al., 1994; Batiuk et al., 2005; Contardo & Tolbert, 2008; Duguid, Hawkey, & Knights, 1998; Lichtenberger & Onyewu 2005; Steurer et al., 2001; Tewksbury & Vannostrand, 1996; Wilson, Gallagher, & MacKenzie, 2000; Winterfield, Coggeshall, Burke-Storer, Correa, & Tidd, 2009).

In addition to post-release outcomes associated with postsecondary education programs, other benefits have been identified, such as changes in inmate behavior and attitudes and improved conditions in correctional facilities, including reduced disciplinary infractions, improved relationships between inmates and correctional staff, development of positive peer role models, and enhanced inmate self-esteem (Fine et al, 2001; Taylor, 1992, Winterfield et al., 2009).

Voices for *Academic* Postsecondary Programming in Prison

Information on why and how adults access (and don't access) education and training is important to policymakers. Many recognize that engaging the adult learner population is essential to achieving the President's goal of higher postsecondary credential attainment by 2020. Knowing the barriers to access can help policymakers and researchers design policies and programs to improve access. (MPR, 2011). There have been few national-level discussions of the theory and practice of higher education in prison, however several recent initiatives led by policy-makers and practitioners have focused on the topic. This is important to administrators who may determine state and institutional policies regarding postsecondary education.

College and Community Fellowship (CCF) is the leadership behind the Education from the Inside Out Coalition, a nonpartisan collaborative of criminal justice and education advocates whose mission is to expand access to higher education funding in prisons. The mission of the CCF based in New York City is to eliminate individual and social barriers to higher education and to support education, economic stability, and civic participation for formerly incarcerated women. While the recidivism rate for New York State is 44% within three years of release, CCF Fellows have a recidivism rate of less than 2% (Santangelo, 2010). The Education Justice Project held a symposium for prison postsecondary programs in 2010, *Higher Education in Prisons: Strategies for Action*, which brought together dozens of higher education prison programs and conducted a census of nationwide postsecondary programs. While vocational programs are more prevalent, academic programs have a growing advocacy. The goal of the symposium was to expand intellectual discussions of higher education in prison to a national scale. From the symposium came a call for more innovative delivery methodologies designed to increase postsecondary program access and persistence for prisoners.

The Institute for Higher Education Policy conducted a national survey of postsecondary education in state prisons in early 2011. Based on responses from forty-three states many cited logistical challenges associated with providing education in a prison and the use of technology was recommended as one way to establish or expand the delivery of postsecondary education (Gorgol, Sponsler 2011). Policy makers and practitioners are increasingly calling for identification of innovative delivery methodologies designed to increase postsecondary program access and persistence for prisoners.

Several challenges associated with implementation of postsecondary programs are documented in a recent national study (Meyer et al, 2010). Challenges to success include: ensuring student academic readiness, providing adequate guidance for administrators when selecting a provider, outlining clear expectations of each key partner, dedicating sufficient education staff to facilitate programming, providing practical assistance in building and maintaining a new program, ensuring quality-of-service with distance learning providers, and gaining buy-in from site-level non-education staff.

Supporting the Establishment and Expansion of Postsecondary Programs in Prison

Based on recent and ongoing research, the documented benefits of postsecondary academic programs in prisons, and our experience as field agents in the Correctional Education

Association's (CEA) recent study involving over 40 prisons nationwide, we believe that the highest priority goals for *establishing* or *expanding* postsecondary academic programming in the nation's prisons are threefold:

- To increase access to and persistence in postsecondary academic courses for a targeted group of offenders;
- To deliver general education core courses through a variety of platforms including innovative high-quality technology; and
- To document success for national replication among state prisons.

Several models of programming exist for establishing or expanding postsecondary academic programs in prisons. Implementation quality and fidelity vary widely among and within each of these models.

This article is designed to provide specific and practical guidance to state- and institution-level administrators who seek to establish or expand postsecondary programs in correctional facilities. First, lists of expectations for each key partner involved in establishing or expanding postsecondary programs are presented. Next, specific guidance is presented in the areas of: fostering program support, building and maintaining local capacity, identifying and supporting students, and selecting and monitoring a postsecondary provider. The article concludes with a discussion of predominant distance learning approaches used for these types of programs and offers a vision for examining the impact of three types of program delivery to support development of effective and replicable programs.

Although many states have contracts with local colleges or universities which provide direct instruction to inmate students within the prison walls, distance learning models are also common nationwide. The guidance offered in this article may be applied to programs using either direct instruction or distance learning. Guidance for distance learning programs is emphasized, however, for two reasons: our experience gained from the CEA study was largely observing and working with distance learning programs and distance learning by its very nature presents a set of unique challenges. The need to manage these and other challenges to effective program delivery inspired the development of this article.

Foundation for Guidance – Recent Research Experience

The guidance in this article emerged from the *Correctional Education Association College of the Air Program (CEA/COA) National Study of College Programs in State Prisons.* This study used a random assignment design and was conducted in over 40 prisons in seven states. Roughly half the sites were assigned to implement the CEA/COA program and half to provide other types of postsecondary programs (ranging from local community college direct instruction to distance learning solutions). Through a partnership with the CEA and Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) in Wisconsin, the CEA/COA program offered general education/liberal arts and sciences courses leading to an Associate of Arts degree to students in prison. Data collection was conducted twice annually, fall and spring, using a standardized test of critical thinking, student and site coordinator surveys, classroom observations, and interviews and focus groups with state administrators, site coordinators, and students. Two articles in the *CEA Journal* (June

2010 and June 2011 issues) offer detailed information about the study and preliminary findings (Meyer et al, 2010; Meyer, 2011). Comprehensive reports from this study that examine outcomes for students across sites will be available after data collection is complete in late 2011. Authors Borden and Richardson were the field agents for this study, traveling to over 40 prisons twice annually between fall 2008 and spring 2011 to collect data. With decades of experience as correctional educators and many years experience in correctional education evaluation and consultation, the authors were equipped to assimilate a tremendous amount of information regarding exemplary practices and barriers to implementation. This kind of consistent exposure to sites; the geographic, cultural, and strategic diversity of the states involved; and remaining current with national trends and policies all inform the guidance which follows.

Key Partner Roles and Responsibilities

To establish or expand postsecondary programs, three primary partners are typically involved: 1) the education division of the Department of Corrections; 2) the postsecondary program provider(s); and 3) an external evaluation team. Below we present checklists of expectations for each partner.

Education Division:

- ☐ confirm state agreements between corrections and postsecondary providers
- ☐ identify a primary contact for project who will oversee implementation and evaluation
- ☐ provide primary and secondary site coordination contacts for each participating institution
- ☐ identify and document numbers of postsecondary eligible offenders
- ☐ conduct readiness assessments to determine appropriateness for college placement
- ☐ identify and document that a minimum number of offenders at each institution meet academic criteria and participate in postsecondary academic education
- ☐ provide remediation, tutoring, and/or mentors for students as needed
- ☐ provide postsecondary programming according to project description
- ☐ adhere to all college enrollment and drop procedures
- ☐ facilitate communication between students and college provider
- ☐ arrange for inmate access to working areas for college programming including access to necessary technology and reference materials
- ☐ provide access to designated institution(s) for instructors and evaluation team, including assistance with prison entry protocol
- ☐ coordinate education scheduling with other institutional divisions
- ☐ act as fiscal agent by providing timely distribution of funds as stipulated in the approved budget
- ☐ conduct regular and timely collection of student academic participation and completion records
- ☐ assist evaluation team in retrieving contact information for students who are released to document post-release outcomes
- ☐ provide state definition and rate of recidivism annually
- ☐ disseminate evaluation findings and lessons learned to practitioner and policy audiences

Postsecondary Provider(s):

- ☐ design programming delivery platform
- ☐ provide cost-effective, high-quality, engaging, interactive postsecondary general education core courses
- ☐ offer course rotation which is practical for attainment and feasible within prison settings
- ☐ supervise implementation of course curricula and instruction
- ☐ facilitate timely delivery of all requisite books and materials
- ☐ coordinate with sites for transfer of coursework between institutions and college
- ☐ respond to student coursework with timely feedback
- ☐ advise on all components of programming delivery and implementation
- ☐ maintain credits-earned database
- ☐ provide clear transcript request process and respond in timely fashion
- ☐ disseminate evaluation findings and lessons learned to practitioner and policy audiences

External Evaluation Team:

- ☐ assist state in developing performance objectives, evaluation measures, targeted goal percentages, and data sources for performance objectives
- ☐ assist in identifying data tracking, reporting format and data collection protocols
- ☐ develop student surveys and post-release interview questions
- ☐ conduct annual onsite visits to observe programs and facilitate data collection
- ☐ collect and report both qualitative and quantitative program measures
- ☐ follow all institutional security protocols
- ☐ establish post-release contacts
- ☐ collect and aggregate student academic participation and completion records
- ☐ conduct all post-release interviews and maintain statistics (results)
- ☐ develop requisite reports
- ☐ disseminate evaluation findings and lessons learned to practitioner and policy audiences

Practical Guidance for Establishing and Expanding Postsecondary Programs in Prison

A variety of specific guidance is presented in the next section to help support the establishment and expansion of successful programs. Guidance is presented in the following four areas:

1) *Fostering program support*, including maintenance of frequent and open communication with all relevant stakeholders and addressing resistance;

2) *Building and maintaining local capacity*, including identifying effective site coordinators and other staff, sharing resources to maximize success, integrating workforce initiatives, and evaluating program impact;

3) ***Identifying and supporting students***, including prioritizing academic readiness and accessibility, conducting vocational and academic needs assessments, and addressing transitional issues; and

4) ***Selecting and monitoring a postsecondary provider***, including identification of appropriate courses and curricula, careful consideration of delivery infrastructure, resolution of contract issues, and attending to underperformance.

Fostering Program Support

Include all institutional departments. Too often education expansions are conceived and implemented internally, considering only statewide educational players and necessary administrative approval. Including bureaus such as fiscal, information technology, personnel, treatment services, purchasing, contracts, grant management, research, and, perhaps most critically, security in initial planning stages can yield three-fold benefits: improved buy-in from those whose support can help facilitate implementation; partnership in trouble-shooting solutions when barriers are encountered; and dissemination of results to divisions and the general public when programs are markedly successful. Acquire commitment from these partners early in the process, even seeking contribution during exploratory discussions and needs assessments.

Conduct open discussions with all education staff. The debate about academic versus vocational programming for prisoners is an important one. Intuitively, vocational courses hold some appeal; they often take less time to complete than academic courses of study, and they offer work-related skills that prisoners may use immediately upon release. The question that remains, however, is whether vocational education offers the same benefits as more traditional academic work. Even education staff may vary widely in their opinions regarding this difference. Open discussions may help clarify goals to ensure objectives are complementary rather than competitive.

Conduct regular institution-wide communication. Once a program is running smoothly, don't assume that all entities share education's enthusiasm or knowledge of results. Continue to involve and inform partners to ensure that successes are shared and that any concerns are identified and addressed.

Address resistance. Detractors will emerge. Nothing repels these arguments as effectively as results. Document them clearly and in terms non-educators can understand. Display and disseminate them widely. Repeat them often. Few arguments are as emotional as the public's perception and oft-repeated *I'm paying for my child to attend college; why should these offenders get it free?* Prepare solid statistics which focus on cost-effectiveness, tax-payer savings, long-term benefits, employment enhancement, and community advantage. Above all, though, listen to these arguments for in their seeds educators may find program improvement germination.

Building and Maintaining Local Capacity

Acquire committed site-level facilitators. Dedicated educators who coordinate programs will help produce enthusiastic students, institution-wide networking, and effective communication with college providers. Throughout the CEA/COA research project, the most important role we provided was coordinating communication among all the partners. Too often classroom teachers are focused on their own daily activities; administrators are concerned with bigger-picture matters; college providers are unfamiliar with prison environments and their myriad challenges; security is focused on a singular objective; other programming agents are frustrated with scheduling conflicts; students are seeking personal change while living in environments which foster lockstep obedience; and no one is seeing the project from the air. A single site-level advocate for postsecondary programming can produce tremendous change. Ensure that adequate staff time exists for this advocate. Adding responsibility for such programming under *Other Duties as Assigned* is a recipe for frustration and failure.

Share resources and recruit. Often we encountered school buildings with resources designated for specific users which could not or would not be shared among programs. Literacy, secondary, and postsecondary students have many developmental issues in common such as soft skills deficiencies, socialization issues, and post-release challenges which can be addressed with shared resources regardless of academic advancement. Does a computer lab site idle during evening and weekend hours? Are teachers given flexible hour choices which might open the school to students who work during the day? Does the staff have a public-information advocate who enjoys seeking alternative resources or conducting civic informational meetings? Prisons are an "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" enterprise. Recruit new talent. Are local college students who are engaged in the pursuit of education degrees made aware of correctional education as a career choice?

Integrate workforce initiatives such as WorkKeys. This nationwide emerging model provides a common language for both education and labor. Education's orientation to the workforce tends to be a broader application of foundational skills through academic achievement designed to provide the learner opportunities for employment in a variety of fields. Labor's orientation to the workforce is more specifically focused on trades, skill- or competency-based certifications, and displaced worker retraining. Education provides academic rigor for job clusters while labor provides critical short-term training and placement. Each has strengths crucial to the successful reentry of offenders to communities and jobs. *WorkKeys* has supplied a language common to both education and labor which retains the strengths of each entity.

Clearly define evaluative methodology and evaluate impact. Student and program outcome measures should be just that … measureable. Targeted percentages with realistic timetables will help establish benchmarks for the evaluation team. Writing proposals with the assistance of the contracted evaluator helps ensure seamless program improvement from inception to final reporting. However, recognizing that degree completion is not the only end-game, qualitative measures should be imbedded in any program to establish effect. If even a single successful course can be life-changing, find a way to measure and report that outcome to substantiate program impact.

Identifying and Supporting Students

Prioritize student academic readiness and accessibility. Without proper assessments to determine eligibility and readiness, any postsecondary academic program is doomed to fail. Whether the college provider conducts such assessment or the education division prioritizes such testing, it must be done. Students are academically fragile, having survived years of negative school experiences and failures. Putting students who are eager for the prestige of college but unprepared for the rigor of college is a practice which will discourage them from continuing, waste the state's tuition money, create reports which cannot prove effectiveness, and eventually become fodder for those who would discredit college for offenders. Select offenders whose access to school is probable and whose transfer to non-programming institutions is unlikely for a prescribed amount of time.

Conduct both academic and vocational needs assessments. Provide a blend of programming which addresses both academic and vocational skills. Postsecondary academic coursework is not an appropriate path for all offenders. Validating both can lend credibility to each.

Address transitional issues. The two elements of success most departments of corrections care about are employment and recidivism. Secondarily, post-release information might include continuing education/training and whether training incurred while incarcerated produced employment in that area of training. Documenting and disseminating such information can improve administrative commitment and help inform program change or expansion. These positive results can also motivate those still incarcerated. Time and time again, we documented students and staff saying that having postsecondary academic programs in place motivated secondary students to obtain a high school diploma or equivalent in pursuit of higher education. Furthermore, most students are unprepared to navigate the complex maze of agencies, departments, credits, and certifications offenders encounter to reach employment and continuing education. Workshops should address these transitional barriers. Integration with existing reentry programs is optimal.

Selecting and Monitoring a Postsecondary Provider

Early in the CEA/COA study, we quickly became the conduits for sites and the college to express their frustrations. Below is a list of the elements sites might want to consider when selecting and then monitoring a postsecondary provider which are gleaned from mediating these frustrations:

Identify appropriate courses and curricula. General education core courses which lead to the attainment of a degree are most broadly applied in post-release continuing education. Program-specific certifications such as business management or computerized accounting, although popular, are less generalizable. When selecting course rotations and/or certificated programs, ensure that students will have ample time to complete requisite benchmarks given average sentence lengths, eligibility guidelines, inevitable institutional transfers, and resources.

Consider delivery infrastructures carefully. Direct instruction can certainly provide the most interactive and authentic college experience for many students. If states opt for distance learning

platforms, innovative technological solutions will have components which can expand and contract with necessary security concerns. In either direct instruction or distance learning, exceptional models will prepare students for real-world work environments while adhering to the mission of corrections which will always prioritize protecting the public. As Internet delivery is increasingly prevalent outside of prison settings, infrastructures which provide simulation of Internet research, delivery, and interaction are most preferred.

Identify best delivery models based on more than just funding. When considering postsecondary programming, offering either direct instruction or distance learning is often dependent on available funding or anticipated costs. Elements such as feasibility, national trends, current research, student need *and* request, personnel and space resources, post-release applicability, attainable performance measures and targeted goals, and sustainability should all play roles equal with funding when considering postsecondary academic programming. Many states have additional considerations such as unions and all states face political fallout with unpopular or underperforming programs.

Ensure the delivery model accommodates challenges created by student mobility. Although direct instruction may be the best educational delivery platform, distance learning solutions may prove more feasible for serving a population in constant transit. Dismissing distance learning as substandard may eliminate real solutions which can provide consistent and standardized programming from high-security environments to post-release continuing education.

Resolve contract issues prior to commencement of courses. One state in the CEA study discontinued all CEA/COA college programming because of unresolved contract issues. Data collection commenced in the fall but students were never given any courses. When we returned in the spring to conduct follow-up data collection activities, students and site-level staff were perplexed and discouraged with the lack of courses despite their willingness to participate. Contracts must be firmly in place before students are recruited. The effect of promising college courses and then never delivering them was de-motivational to students and frustrating for staff.

Attend to an underperforming postsecondary provider. When addressing a college which is not offering acceptable services, apply the N.E.A.T. method: Notify, Explain, Assist, Time. If the college is given enough time to improve yet continues its non-performing behavior, seek other vendors. Extending the hope that things will change beyond reasonable timeframes and sincere assistance will discourage students and staff alike, affect performance results, create poor reports, and dissolve into an unsustainable program.

Quality Standards for External Postsecondary Program Providers

Performance standards are often difficult to assess until a contract with a college is secured and services are underway. Below we present several quality standards to consider for assessing and monitoring the quality of external postsecondary providers.

General Operations

- Current customers (administrators, site-level educators, students) speak highly of courses and services provided
- Registration and drop deadlines are clear, consistent and enforced
- Classes begin and end on schedule with books in hand at class commencement
- A specific responsive contact person at the college is assigned to the prison college project
- If the platform of delivery is technological, an I.T. person is assigned to the prison college project to determine delivery protocols, technology infrastructure required, and to troubleshoot issues with sites

Courses and Course Materials

- Course rotation is regular, frequent, and facilitates degree attainment
- Courses are designed to be transferrable
- Courses and materials are engaging, relevant, and timely
- Reference materials and supplemental content is up-to-date in such things as political topics and current events
- DVDs or other supplemental materials are commercial quality and relevant to course and text(s)

Instructors

- Instructor syllabi are well-organized, coherent, and align with requisite editions of texts
- Instructor response time is no longer than 2-3 days
- No subsequent assignment is requested before feedback is provided on previous assignment
- Adjunct instructors visit college campus often enough to gather mail/assignments and respond quickly
- Appeal and grade-change processes are clearly defined and disseminated to students and staff
- Instructors make reasonable efforts to understand the unique environment of prisons and the challenges therein. Orientation visits to prisons are encouraged

Transcripts

- Transcript request form is understandable
- Transcript cost is clear for both official and unofficial versions
- Transcript form is accessible both online and by mail
- Transcripts arrive within one month of request

Bookstore

- Book order process is clear, forms are correct with current editions and ISBNs, and are disseminated to sites well in advance of registration deadline
- Bookstore personnel/manager are accessible and communicate regularly
- Books and materials are shipped well in advance of first day of courses
- Billing and refunds are processed quickly

Nationwide Distance Learning Solutions

Following the conclusion of the CEA/COA study, several states opted to discontinue the CEA/COA program. Many are seeking distance learning providers which both address past deficiencies in service delivery and offer high-quality, engaging programming. Simultaneously, federal funding for postsecondary education in prisons (*Community and Transition Training for Incarcerated Individuals Program*) was eliminated for FY2012. As states consider postsecondary programming and as correctional education leaders and policy-makers begin to re-frame postsecondary funding for prisons, this presents an ideal time to examine innovative approaches.

While college professors directly teaching courses within prison schools is perhaps the best way to deliver this programming to prisoners, it is not the norm. Many states have pockets of direct instruction through contracts and agreements with local community colleges. However, in the current fiscal climate of ever-increasing college tuition and decreasing state funding for education of any kind within prisons, states are in need of immediate solutions which can be implemented quickly and are cost-effective. Distance learning can provide such solutions.

The extent to which a successful distance learning platform can address postsecondary academic programming within prisons is still being determined. The Corrections Learning Network was launched in 1999 as a Star Schools project, a satellite platform designed to delivery literacy, life skills, and secondary education to prisons nationwide. It was acquired by the CEA in 2004 and renamed Transforming Lives Network. For nearly ten years this platform served as a supplement to education within hundreds of prison schools nationwide. However, the challenges of broadcasting in six time zones, the fiscal burden of the satellite uplink, and emerging interactive technologies eventually rendered this platform impractical.

In 2009, CEA was invited to the White House to advise the current administration on, among other issues, recommended potential technological solutions for prison education. CEA had recently completed a year-long Public Telecommunications Facility Program Planning Grant to determine the most feasible technological solutions to prison education needs. This project was crucial in identifying available technological solutions and the extent to which they address the needs and restrictions of prisons. Although use of the Internet as a platform for educational delivery continues to expand, some consider it impractical for use in a secure environment. However, Internet access is currently being made available in correctional education settings in other countries such as the United Kingdom, India, and Australia. Security concerns are certainly paramount but are not the only challenge. Prisons are often built in remote locations,

many of which do not yet have technology to support emerging platforms. Funding sources do not allow for the considerable expense of building and maintaining requisite infrastructures. Many prisons are technological retrofits and do not contain wiring suitable for the quality of service necessary in such instructional delivery platforms. Political climates do not favor offender access to Internet even if secure firewalls and protections are available. Other more engaging delivery modes such as videoconferencing or Web-based platforms such as Blackboard are also cost-prohibitive in remote locations.

CEA has continued to search for economic and immediate technological solutions to meeting offender and staff educational and training needs throughout the nation's jails and prisons, considering both synchronous and asynchronous solutions. Four options that have emerged as potential solutions are presented in Appendix A.

Next Steps: Examining Models for Delivering Postsecondary Programming

The following three delivery models make up the majority of academic college programming:

Direct Instruction from Community Colleges or Universities. Many states have contracts in place with colleges/universities which have been providing general education core academic courses to inmate students.

Synchronous Learning. Point-to-multipoint instruction takes place in real time. Platforms such two-way audio/video or satellite delivery can address students in many places with a single instructor. Students participating in two-way audio/video models may use push-to-talk microphones and may be linked to other prison sites or college campus sites.

Asynchronous Learning. Point-to-point instruction takes place anytime. Students are linked to instructors through a variety of platforms. Direct online Internet is preferred. However, security concerns may dictate that courses be delivered via Internet-based technology without a live Internet connection. Technology such as Blackboard or WebCT links students and instructors via a secure server and can be accessed at any time. Courses may also be delivered via DVD distribution or individual hard drives with entire rotations of courses available to students. Finally, perhaps the most common but least interactive of all models, paper-and-pencil correspondence has little, if any, direct communication with instructors and relies heavily on self-motivation for success.

Little is known about the relative effectiveness of these three models or about the extent to which they may be more or less effective in different settings. Rigorous research is needed to understand their relative impact by relating implementation components to participant outcomes. Ideally, program funding would be used to support several different models of postsecondary education delivery platforms and to measure common outcomes across them. Pairing implementation with a rigorous research methodology can begin to highlight effective practice.

It is not enough to offer college to offenders. We must also demonstrate program impact both while inmates are incarcerated and after their release.

More rigorous studies of postsecondary correctional education programs are needed to inform decisions related to policy and practice. As states face significant budget cuts and depletion of personnel, it is incumbent on practitioners and policy-makers to carefully select and fund programs which show definitive results. Avoiding some of the pitfalls demonstrated through recent projects and illuminated here may aid in that selection process.

CEA will continue exploring distance learning modalities as prison environments grow and change. Internet and its many benefits cannot be ignored as a feasible approach to distance learning within correctional settings. Additionally, as the GED tests moves to computer-based testing nationwide, at the very least, offenders must be taught computer literacy and the use of the Internet in simulation experiences. Piloting actual Internet instruction at progressive sites with willing administrators is essential to determining the best securities and utilization of Internet-based methodologies.

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APPENDIX A

Technology Options for Correctional Education

Synchronous Instruction

Platform: Two-way audio/video instruction - Point to Multipoint (i.e. Polycom)	
Instruction from a single point over a two-way audio/video camera to several receive sites	
Advantages	**Limitations**
Brings students together virtually for study and discussion	Majority of prison sites have limited or no access to lines/cable in school buildings
Provides critical social interaction with on-campus classrooms (virtually)	Without dedicated lines/cable to education, buffering, freeze-frame, and other quality issues arise frequently as network line fills up
Immediate student assistance from call-in to instructor	Remote sites have no lines/cable access
Immediate instructor feedback	Limited I.T. support
Push-to-talk mics reduce ambient noise	Expense of lines/cable
	Does not accommodate full motion video quality
	Production reflects a tendency toward *talking head* over full motion video

Platform: Satellite - Point to Multipoint (i.e. TLN)	
Instruction beamed from satellite to dish mounted on site roof; received through decoder and TV monitor at each site in real time	
Advantages	**Limitations**
Satellite reaches everyone everywhere with simple dish and decoder, eliminating remote site access issues	Multi-media experiences offered by online courses and critical to the nature of offender learners is lacking in this one-way delivery mode
Live broadcast capability; live staff development available in training room with call-in phone	Guided discussions on live broadcast work best for live replay; taping and replaying creates lack of immediate accountability; live broadcasts generate responsibility
Ideal for longer instructional segments	Addressing 6 time zones simultaneously
Encryption permits Forced Tuning, which allows broadcast of proprietary information simultaneously and more control over site participation vs. *in-the-clear* broadcast	Data capacity limited to video only
	Site installation and maintenance of equipment unpredictable
Accommodates full motion video quality and better resolution quality	During local storms and equinox sun outages satellite can be interrupted causing pixilation and brief complete blackouts
Cost effective	
Leasing satellite segment space to private prisons for proprietary distribution is revenue-generating possibility	

Asynchronous Instruction

Platform: Simulated browser-based learning - Point to Point (i.e. Web CT)	
Instruction over dedicated private line using Internet technology without actual Internet connection	
Advantages	**Limitations**
Multi-media, high quality Internet-based instruction in a closed network	Selling anything "Internet"-based to prison security and administrators
Uses Internet Protocol without actual connection to the Internet by traveling on the LAN	Each student needs access to a computer
Interactive instruction with an Internet-like experience for students	Retro-fitting older prisons to lines/cable or dedicated education Internet connections is costly
Full motion video available even on larger screens (with possible end-user limitations)	
Asynchronous access; eliminates recording programming	
Automatic feedback on assessments	
Learning experience enriched with easy access to supplementary information	

Platform: Internet - Multipoint to Multipoint (i.e. on-line courses)	
Instruction over the World Wide Web using actual Internet connection	
Advantages	**Limitations**
Virtually limitless multi-media, high quality Internet-based instruction	Inmate access to the World Wide Web may create fear in the public and liability for administration
Interactive instruction with a real-life experience for students	Potential access to inappropriate sites
Full motion video available even on larger screens (with possible end-user limitations)	Each student needs access to a computer
Asynchronous access; eliminates recording programming	Retro-fitting older prisons to lines/cable or dedicated education Internet connections is costly
Automatic feedback on assessments	Geographically remote sites may not have ready access to broadband or wireless reception
Learning experience enriched with easy access to supplementary information and research	