



AUBURN UNIVERSITY
ALABAMA PRISON ARTS + EDUCATION
PROJECT

October 12, 2021

Mr. Mike Kensler, Director
Office of Sustainability
Langdon Hall Annex
Auburn University, AL 36849

Dear Mr. Kensler:

We are excited that the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project (APAEP) will be included in the Auburn University Sustainability Tracking and Assessment Rating System (STARS) report for this year. The Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project at Auburn University offers access to educational opportunities to those currently incarcerated across the state. In addition to robust community education and arts programming, APAEP also offers a college degree pathway, made possible through the U.S. Department of Education's Second Chance Pell Experimental Site Initiative, which allows incarcerated students to receive Pell grants to use for enrollment at select institutions of higher education around the country.

The APAEP/AU College Program provides students with a similar educational experience they would receive on Auburn's campus, as many of the same student support services are provided, including peer tutoring, access to library resources, writing center consultations, accessibility resources, and consistent contact hours with Auburn faculty. According to a 2020 report from the Vera Institute of Justice, 70% percent of all jobs in 2027 will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school. However, only 11% of incarcerated people in Alabama state prisons have gotten this qualification. The APAEP/AU College Program helps alleviate these number and improves students' chances of finding a job post-release. Education in prison is also proven to reduce recidivism and break cycles of intergenerational incarceration, as well as increase the likelihood that children of incarcerated parents will themselves also pursue further education.

An APAEP College Program student wrote upon completion of the freshman year, "APAEP has blessed us with not only the opportunity to obtain the tools needed for success, but also a gained sense of our value as individuals...These are my classmates, my friends, my brothers, and my symbols of a bigger life, a greater goal." APAEP furthers Auburn's mission as a land-grant University by *"improving the lives of the people of Alabama, the nation, and the world through forward-thinking education, life-enhancing research and scholarship, and selfless service."* APAEP believe that access to quality education is a right to which all people should have access.

Sincerely,

Shaelyn Smith
Program Coordinator
Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project