



## 5. Roadmap for Other States

California's unlikely marriage between higher education and criminal justice has benefitted from several legislative and policy building blocks, all of which can be replicated in other jurisdictions.

### FOUNDATION

#### ▮▮ **Apportionment for incarcerated students**

SB 1391 (2014) allowed community colleges to offer face-to-face courses inside prison and to include these students in their budgets just as if they were on campus. This provided an avenue for fiscal sustainability, although it does not fully cover the additional costs required to staff a program in custody or additional costs required to bring a new and non-traditional student group to degree completion.

#### ▮▮ **Universal tuition fee waiver**

The California College Promise Grant (formerly the Board of Governors Fee Waiver) covers tuition for every low-income student in the state's community colleges, including those who are or who have been in custody. California's tuition waiver has been critical to the success of the expansion within prisons and jails.

#### ▮▮ **Lack of admission barriers**

California's public colleges and universities have no undergraduate admissions barriers for students who have been in the criminal justice system, nor have they ever had such restrictions. Students who are or who have been in prison or jail are eligible to attend a UC, CSU and community college just as any other student in the state.



### BACKGROUND LANDSCAPE

#### Focus on criminal justice reform

California has experienced this growth during an era of larger criminal justice reform, while national attention is focused on the adverse consequences of and potential solutions to mass incarceration. New focus on the importance of providing evidence-based rehabilitation programs has incentivized criminal justice agencies to partner with their local public colleges.

#### Top leadership support

The state has benefited from strong leadership in both corrections and higher education, including the Governor, the Secretary of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, the Chancellor of the California State University, and the Chancellor of the University of California. Although change does not materialize solely from a top-down directive, having the vocal support of senior leadership has been critical to the implementation success of the partnerships.

#### Capacity to increase enrollment

California's economy has remained strong, providing an incentive for community colleges to increase enrollment. Although insufficient on its own, the growth incentive meant that campus advocates were able to gain internal support from a range of stakeholders who otherwise might have been opposed to these new programs.

#### Flexible local funding

California's community colleges have access to categorical funding streams that can be allocated locally for a broad range of purposes, including serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students. Most colleges serving these students use state-provided Equity Funds, among other sources. Although Equity funds are generally not sufficient on their own to cover all costs, the fact that the funds are not restricted to traditional race-based definitions has provided a means by which those who are committed to prioritizing these students can support their programs.

#### Correlation with system priorities

Both the higher education and criminal justice systems are designing solutions that align with existing initiatives. For example, California, like other states, is implementing Guided Pathways to focus student choices and course scheduling into a smaller number of more valuable options. Just as on campus, students inside prison and jail will benefit from a Guided Pathway that culminates in credential or degree.



### IMPLEMENTATION

#### ▮▮ Academic transfer pathways

Because the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has been providing career technical education (CTE) in prison for decades, local community colleges were able to focus on full credit transferrable degree pathways for incarcerated students from the beginning. The colleges did not first have to meet a demand for short-term job training, which has been an issue faced in other states.

#### ▮▮ Respecting jurisdiction

CDCR and the community colleges view each other as partners, with separate spheres of control. The colleges don't interfere with the security obligations of the institution, and the institutions don't interfere with the education processes of the colleges.

#### ▮▮ Educationally driven

Higher education partnerships are housed in the state's educational structure, not in criminal justice, even when the focus is incarcerated students. This ensures academic independence and educational quality, and sends the message that currently and formerly incarcerated students are students like any other.

#### ▮▮ Student integration

On campus, formerly incarcerated students are integrated into the student population. Neither the colleges nor the criminal justice agencies (such as probation and parole) funnel formerly incarcerated students into special off-campus programs or siphon them off from the rest of the student population. This allows students to develop a transformative student identity and reap the social capital benefits the campus experience provides.

#### ▮▮ Fostering student leadership

Momentum and advocacy in the state has been both top down and bottom up, and includes the student voice as well as staff, faculty, and community advocates. The development of student leaders has been particularly critical, as there is no stronger voice in support of higher education opportunities than the students themselves.