



4. Formerly Incarcerated Students on Campus

Many formerly incarcerated students begin their higher education journey while incarcerated but are released before degree completion. Thousands more are living in the community with no college credits, hoping to obtain better employment by earning a credential or degree. California's public colleges are again leading the nation by systematically creating pathways to campus and to degree completion for these potential students.

On campus as in custody, support has increased exponentially over the past few years. For the most part, formerly incarcerated students prior to 2014 stayed in the shadows or did not enroll at all. Probation departments and parole units often overlooked the local community colleges as potential partners. Support programs were rare, and students rarely self-identified.

Since 2014, community college programs have grown across the state, Project Rebound has replicated across nine CSU campuses, and UC's Underground Scholars has expanded. Formerly incarcerated college students are disclosing their status, facing down stereotypes and demanding a second chance. Probation and

parole departments are training their officers to ask their supervisees about educational goals, and developing connections with their local community colleges. College campuses are identifying staff contacts for probation, parole, and reentry organizations, helping to build pathways to enrollment and degree completion for formerly incarcerated students. A third of all community colleges now have a formal or informal program for formerly incarcerated students, with peer support, outreach, and advocacy. Perhaps most importantly, formerly incarcerated student leaders are emerging, embracing public leadership roles, overcoming the stigma of incarceration, and offering hope to thousands of potential students behind them.

LEADERS IN THE FIELD

Project Rebound

“Education was my biggest change.”



youtu.be/B3RKdzKf6XE

Project Rebound assists formerly incarcerated individuals who want to enroll in the California State University system. Once admitted, Rebound students receive peer mentoring, assistance negotiating financial aid and other campus services, academic advising, tutoring and other support. The program began at San Francisco State 50 years ago, and in the past two years has expanded to Cal State Bakersfield, Fresno State, Cal State Fullerton, Cal State LA, Cal Poly Pomona, Sacramento State, Cal State San Bernardino, and San Diego State. Hiring staff who are themselves formerly incarcerated has been crucial to student success in the Rebound program.

Shasta College

“I’m going to walk you through this chapter of your life, but you get to create the future.”



youtu.be/GISqCMoSv98

Shasta College sits in a politically conservative and rural area of Northern California. In 2013, the Sheriff began allowing participants early release from jail on the condition that they enroll in STEP-UP, a career-technical program at Shasta College for formerly incarcerated students. Staffed with a full-time program manager and a dedicated Probation contact, STEP-UP has built partnerships to address the housing, transportation, food insecurity, and other needs of its students. The student cohort benefits from bridge courses, peer support, and immersion in the campus culture from health fairs to art performances. Two neighboring counties have asked to replicate the program, and the county criminal justice funding partnership allocated funds to support the program. In 2017, STEP-UP received the statewide Chancellor’s Student Success Award.

SUCCESS METRICS

Between 2011 and 2016, 97% of fully matriculated Project Rebound students at San Francisco State graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree within six years, compared to 57% for CSU students statewide.

In just two years, Shasta College’s STEP-UP enrollment rose from 15 to 50 students, and drop outs fell to 16% from 40%. In fall 2017, nearly half of the 50 STEP-UP students made the Dean’s List with a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

One-third of all scholars in Compton College’s Formerly Incarcerated Students in Transition (F.I.S.T.) program maintain a GPA of 3.5 or higher. F.I.S.T students are nearly all African-American and Latino.