



6. Call to Action

California stands at the edge of an incredible transformation – higher education access and success for thousands of residents who would otherwise be left behind. But we achieve this goal only if the state continues to prioritize, support and deepen these ongoing efforts. The state must focus on outcomes for this endeavor to be a long-term success.

ACTION ITEMS:

✓ **Recognize the efforts of both systems**

Expanding higher education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students is often viewed as criminal justice reform, with legislators and others extolling the public safety benefits and reduced recidivism that derives from a college education. But the colleges are carrying half the burden; they are effectively providing a public safety service without being part of the public safety budget. Moreover, the value of education goes far beyond just reduced recidivism, as it can transform individuals, families, and communities. The state must recognize the efforts of both systems as equal partners when making budgeting decisions.

✓ **Incentivize local budget allocations**

California's community college system delegates most budget decisions to the local level. Community college districts need an incentive to allocate budget resources and staff for these students, particularly while the programs are in a developmental stage. In a recent survey of community college presidents and CEOs, more than half stated that they have or want to create a program for formerly incarcerated students, but 60% identified lack of financial resources to compensate dedicated staff as their biggest challenge. Reaching any new student group requires intention and focused professional development. We are beseeching the colleges to create new partnerships, to work in new environments, and to develop new competencies. We must commit to an initial investment if we want them to succeed.

✓ **Double down on the details**

CDCR and the community colleges need to double down on the details for students in prison. These new partnerships are fragile. Seemingly mundane issues like who pays copying costs and whether the college faculty can use the desks of CDCR staff can derail the entire arrangement. Larger issues such as asking college faculty to travel long distances, or asking CDCR staff to be available for the colleges that are teaching in the evenings, can upend complex union agreements. It is not easy, and on-the-ground faculty and staff in both systems are filing grievances while they work through these changing job assignments and descriptions. New agreements can be reached if the resources are there, and once resolved these issues should diminish. But it will take time and dedication.

✓ **Establish sustainable funding**

When budgets tighten and community college enrollment caps are reduced, teaching inside prisons and jails will be disincentivized because it is more expensive for the colleges to provide education inside a correctional facility. Yet Proposition 57, passed in 2016 and supported by the Governor, incentivizes rehabilitative programming – including college education – and relies on the availability of community colleges teaching in prison. To fulfill the goals of Proposition 57 and continue serving these students, the state must prepare for the budget downturn by establishing sustainable funding.

✓ **Meet quality standards**

Continued pressure to meet quality standards is critical. For students in prison or jail, this means face-to-face instruction, substantive educational counseling and guidance, and coordination between the different colleges teaching inside so that students benefit from Guided Pathways just as their campus counterparts do. Students, faculty and advocates must fight against systemic pressure to replace face-to-face with online education, which, while opening more access, can fail to benefit unprepared students such as those in prison or jail. Correspondence courses by mail should be eliminated. Distance education should be offered only if face-to-face education is not feasible, should be fully interactive, should include full educational counseling and support, and should adhere to quality standards.

✓ **Reinstate Pell Grants for incarcerated students**

Low-income incarcerated students in California are eligible for the College Promise Grant just like any other student in the state, but California is the exception. Nationally, incarcerated students are ineligible for Pell Grants unless their college is one of 67 that participate in the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program. The Pilot Program should be extended, and the ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated students should be lifted.

✓ **Implement a solution to exorbitant textbook costs**

Colleges teaching in prison should not rely on students or their loved ones to cover the high cost of books and supplies, which are estimated to be \$1700 annually for a student in community college. This is an extraordinary expense for a student earning between 8 cents and \$1.00 an hour who must also pay for necessities such as toothpaste, soap, and phone calls to his or her family. Currently, the colleges providing face-to-face instruction are committed to not charging incarcerated students for expensive textbooks, and they are building towards an open source textbook model. CDCR has state funding to provide open source electronic textbooks for all students in prison including those enrolled in the community colleges. Although they have been working on it for a few years, CDCR's plans have not yet come to fruition. Until then, the colleges are using a variety of solutions to cover the exorbitant costs, including paying for textbooks out of their own budgets. These solutions are not sustainable over the long term. The potential for textbook costs to destroy this entire endeavor cannot be overstated.

✓ **Build degree pathways for incarcerated students**

Although they normally operate independently, the community colleges must cooperate if they are to build degree pathways for incarcerated students. While in prison, students can be involuntarily transferred between institutions and between yards. Often, they must change colleges when they are moved. These involuntary movements should not disrupt a student's educational journey or hamper his or her progress to degree. We will not achieve student outcomes if each college offers its own degree pathway, and if students have to begin anew each time they are moved.

✓ **Open avenues to career and leadership**

California must open avenues to career and leadership. The state will not enjoy the benefits of higher education if formerly incarcerated college students are unable to obtain on-campus employment or if they are unable to pursue careers after graduation because of occupational and licensing barriers. To truly transform individuals and communities, the state must reduce occupational licensing and other barriers for formerly incarcerated professionals, as well as create opportunities for expungement for those who have demonstrated that they have changed their lives.