

Benefits of Higher Education – In Prison and After Prison

Higher education is one of the most powerful deterrents to crime and reincarceration. College transforms a person's sense of self and the ways that a person relates to his or her family, community, and the world. In this sense, higher education transforms the lives of students and their children and promotes lasting transitions out of prison¹. Study after study has demonstrated that education, particularly higher education, is one of the most effective ways to break cycles of poverty, incarceration and re-incarceration because higher education creates "[i]nroads of advanced education in communities that suffer from a chronic lack of access."²

Facts:

- Recidivism rates for incarcerated people who had participated in prison education programs were on average 46 percent lower than the rates of incarcerated people who had not taken college classes.³
- 90% of jobs in the fastest growing occupational groups require postsecondary education.⁴
- The inverse relationship between degree level and recidivism rate is not surprising given that a college education has become one of the most valuable assets in the United States. A bachelor's degree is now worth more than \$2.8 million in lifetime earnings.⁵
- Among those who start at the bottom rung of the income ladder, 45% remain there in adulthood if they do not have a college degree compared to only 20% who do so if they obtain a degree.⁶

¹ Fine, M., et al., 2001, Changing Minds: The Impact of College in a Maximum Security Prison," (2001), available at web.gc.cuny.edu/che/changing_minds.pdf ; Steurer, S.J. and Smith, L. G., 2003, Education Reduces Crime: Three State Recidivism Study, Management & Training Corporation, Centerville, Utah. Available at <http://www.ceanational.org/PDFs/EdReducesCrime.pdf> :Open Society Institute. 1997. Education as Crime Prevention: Providing Education to Prisoners. Research Brief, Occasional Paper Series No. 2. Author.

² Karpowitz, D., & Kenner, M. (n.d.). Education and Crime Prevention: The Case for Reinstating Pell Grant Eligibility for the Incarcerated. New York: Bard College.

³ Chappell, Cathryn A. 2004. Post-Secondary Correctional Education and Recidivism: A Meta-Analysis of Research Conducted 1990-1999. *Journal of Correctional Education* 55(2): 148-69.

⁴ National Governor's Association. 2010. Help Wanted: Matching Jobs to Degrees. Complete to Compete, Briefing Paper, Author. Available at <http://www.subnet.nga.org/ci/1011/resources.htm> 2010

⁵ Carnevale, A.P., Rose, S.J. and Cheah, B. 2011. The College Payoff: Education, Occupation and Lifetime Earnings. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Available at <http://cew.georgetown.edu/publications/reports/>

⁶ Pew Charitable Trusts. 2012. Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations. Washington, DC: Author. Available at <http://www.pewstates.org/research/reports>