Research Report

Expanding Opportunities for Education & Employment for College Students in Prison

A Process Evaluation of the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative

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CUNY INSTITUTE FOR STATE & LOCAL GOVERNANCE

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

Decades of research point to the benefits of college in prison, including reduced recidivism and improved employment outcomes following release.[1] Even for those who have not yet been released, these programs foster a sense of community[2] and purpose[3] that can also lead to safer prison environments.[4] Many people enter prison undereducated due to systemic disinvestment in education over the past 50 years, particularly in racial minority neighborhoods.[5,6] Students in economically disadvantaged school districts are disproportionately likely to be BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color).[7,8] Students in these districts also have a significantly higher risk of suspension,[9] which in turn increases their likelihood of being incarcerated later in life as an adult.[10] All told, about one in three incarcerated adults have less than a high school equivalence (HSE), earned prior to or during incarceration, compared to 14 percent of the general public.[11] Additionally, only 15 percent of incarcerated adults earn a postsecondary degree or certificate either prior to or during incarceration, compared to 45 percent of the general population.[12]

With this backdrop in mind, research shows incarcerated people are interested in educational programming: a 2014 survey of a nationally representative sample of incarcerated adults found that 70 percent reported interest in enrolling in an academic class or program.[13] Moreover, at the time of their incarceration, most people had incomes low enough to qualify for financial aid. For Black and Latine individuals, who are overrepresented in the incarcerated population, postsecondary education offers an opportunity to close the opportunity gap.[14]

Despite the benefits, past policies and practices have limited the availability of postsecondary educational programs in prisons. Historically, college-in-prison programs were funded largely by a mix of state and federal funds, notably federal Pell Grants, which can be used to assist low-income students to cover costs such as tuition, fees, room and board, among other expenses.[15] The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 led to a 26-year ban that prohibited incarcerated people from receiving federal and state financial aid to pursue a college education in correctional facilities.[16] At the federal level, this legislation revoked federal financial aid (known as Pell Grants) for incarcerated students.[17] Many states, including New York State (NYS), followed suit by making these students ineligible for equivalent state financial aid programs.[19] Because so many college-in-prison programs relied on a combination of Pell Grants and state financial support (e.g., NYS Tuition Assistance Program, or TAP) prior to 1994, this dramatic reduction in funding led to an immediate drop in the number of state prison systems offering programs: from 38 to 29 in one year.[20] Within the NYS prison system, the total number of college-in-prison programs dropped from 25 to just four.[21] Over the ensuing decades, college-in-prison programs relied almost exclusively on foundations and private funders to operate. By early 2017, college programs in NYS prison facilities were able to accommodate only 4 percent of incarcerated people with high school credentials, leaving long wait lists[22] of prospective students.

Only 15 percent of incarcerated adults earn a postsecondary degree or certificate either prior to or during incarceration, compared to 45 percent of the general population.

It is within this context that, in 2017, then-Governor Andrew Cuomo, former Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr., the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), and the Institute for State & Local Governance at the City University of New York (CUNY ISLG) launched the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative (CIP), a $7.3 million initiative to significantly expand access to postsecondary programs in prisons across New York. CUNY ISLG's research team was responsible for conducting a process evaluation of the Initiative, which documents the implementation of the Initiative from the Fall 2017 semester through Spring 2022 and is described within this report.

The process evaluation was conducted over the five years and was designed to:

1. determine whether CIP was implemented as it was planned;
2. examine the partnerships and relationships that were developed and sustained; and
3. identify the factors that aided or hindered implementation.

The evaluation relied upon both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Overall, the Initiative achieved its aims to expand access to instruction; ensure common degree standards to allow for transfer and degree completion; and provide more intentional, holistic reentry support to assist students in continuing and completing their degree programs. This report highlights key findings from CUNY ISLG's process evaluation and provides key recommendations and guidance for the field at-large post-Pell reinstatement, as institutions across the country prepare to establish new or expand existing college-in-prison programs.

COLLEGE IN PRISON CAN ADVANCE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY

Racial and ethnic inequality is imbued in the American educational system due to systematic disinvestment in schools that primarily serve historically marginalized communities over the last 50 years.[23] Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)[24] and economically disadvantaged communities are overrepresented in prisons, including those in New York, as these communities have historically been over-policed[25] as well as under-resourced with respect to education and schooling. When compared to the general population, formerly incarcerated individuals are nearly twice as likely to have no high school credentials and eight times less likely to have completed college, reflecting the role of educational disadvantage in criminal legal involvement.[26]

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Due to the fact that local property taxes fund the majority of educational costs in the U.S., lower-income school districts are substantially underfunded when compared to districts in higher-income areas. On average, school districts with greater concentrations of Black or Latine students spend $5,000 less per student when compared to districts educating predominantly white student populations.[27] Relatedly, there are similar spending patterns for lower-income districts when compared to higher-income districts. A substantial body of research demonstrates that this systematic under-investment in the nation's K-12 public education system, particularly in schools that primarily serve economically disadvantaged and/or Black and Latine populations, results in lower student

achievement outcomes for affected students.[28] In particular, this perceived discrimination[29] can result in severe symptoms of trauma,[30] poorer health outcomes,[31] and lower quality of life[32] when compared to individuals in white communities and intractable inequality that can persist throughout an individual's lifetime.

Within the schools themselves, there are a number of punitive and exclusionary practices that funnel students out of school and into the criminal legal system. This school-to-prison pipeline operates vis-à-vis practices including: security cameras, metal detectors, property and body searches, the increased presence of police officers/school resource officers on school campuses, suspensions, expulsions, and arrest, among others.[33] Notably, these disciplinary practices are concentrated in schools that are under-resourced, overcrowded, and predominantly serve students of historically marginalized groups (i.e., Black and Latine students). These school policies have been demonstrated to lead to disengagement with school and an increased likelihood of criminal legal system involvement.[34,35]

BENEFITS OF COLLEGE IN PRISON

College-in-prison programs offer many people who are incarcerated the chance to make up for the lack of educational opportunities from which they have been systematically excluded. Taking advantage of these educational programs may even support their successful reentry: research has consistently demonstrated a relationship between correctional education and reduced recidivism. A 2013 meta-analysis of correctional education's effects on recidivism and post-release employment outcomes for incarcerated adults found that people who participated in educational programs had 43 percent lower odds of recidivating when compared to those who did not participate;[36] a more recent meta-analysis found correctional educational program participants were 48 percent less likely to recidivate.[37] Analyses of prison education programs also demonstrate public safety cost-savings due to reduced recidivism. An analysis by RAND corporation found that every dollar spent on correctional education corresponds to four to five dollars in savings on reincarceration costs.[38] Relatedly, the Vera Institute of Justice projected that expanding access to postsecondary education in U.S. prisons would likely reduce recidivism rates. Specifically, if 50 percent of the Pell-eligible population participated in post-secondary education, it would decrease incarceration costs by $365.8 million per year; if 75 percent of Pell-eligible individuals participated, costs would decrease by as much as $548.7 million.[39]

College-in-prison programs also help prepare individuals for navigating life, and particularly employment, upon release—a majority of jobs require some type of educational credential.[40] Additionally, individuals who have been convicted of a crime can expect to earn at least 16 percent less, on average, over their lifetime when compared to individuals who have not.[41] Further, those who have been to prison will lose around half of their lifetime earning potential, which, cumulatively, can undermine their financial well-being ability to escape poverty.[42] Therefore, initiatives that provide students with credentials that can increase their earning potential and their prospects for employment are incredibly important. Indeed, studies show that incarcerated people who participate in education programs are more likely to find employment upon release than those who do not participate.[43] A 2013 meta-analysis found participation in academic and vocational correctional education programs increased the odds of obtaining post-release employment by 13 percent relative to non-participants.[44] Prison education, therefore, provides a vital opportunity toward repairing the unequal conditions that have often prevented historically marginalized communities – Black and Latine communities, in particular – from accessing a quality education and realizing their full academic potential.

A NEW ERA FOR COLLEGE IN PRISON

NYS has gradually scaled up its college-in-prison programming with support from private foundations and public investments in recent years, including CIP.[45] The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, emerging from the 1980s and 90s "tough-on-crime" era, went into effect in 1995.[46] This Act set into motion a 26-year ban that prohibited incarcerated people from receiving federal financial aid to take college classes in prison.[47] Not only did the law revoke federal financial aid (known as Pell Grants) for incarcerated students, but it also paved the way for many states, including New York, to make these students ineligible for equivalent state financial aid programs.[48,49]

The NYS equivalent of Pell Grants is the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP);[50] the state made incarcerated students ineligible for TAP one year after the 1994 removal of federal financial aid for these students.[51] The state's college-in-prison landscape shrunk from 25 programs enrolling 3,445 students in 1995 to only four programs enrolling 256 students the following year.[52]

In more recent years, as both state and federal leaders have begun to reconsider mass incarceration, their focus has shifted toward "smart-on-crime" (evidence-based) criminal legal strategies. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education created the Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative (Second Chance Pell), a pilot program that worked with colleges and universities to provide grants to a maximum of 12,000 incarcerated students per year across 28 states—including students served by several colleges in NYS[53]—with the goal of reducing recidivism by better preparing students for employment following release.[54] Although Second Chance Pell covered only a fraction of those who would be served if Pell eligibility were fully restored, its successful implementation eventually contributed to the full reinstatement of Pell eligibility for incarcerated students through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification Act, lifting the 26-year ban on federal financial aid eligibility for incarcerated college students.[55] The momentous legislation went into effect on July 1, 2023, reversing the portion of the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act that excluded these students from federal financial aid, specifically Pell Grants.[56]

As of 2023, college-in-prison programs can once again apply for Pell Grant funding to cover some of the costs associated with providing postsecondary education to incarcerated students. There are, however, a number of eligibility requirements for programs with regard to which students can be covered by Pell, as well as what the programs themselves must offer in order to be eligible (see *Appendix 1* for Pell Grant eligibility criteria). In short, not all incarcerated people who wish to take postsecondary classes will qualify for Pell Grant funding, and programs that want to apply for funding must meet certain requirements to receive it. Following federal suit, in April 2022, the NYS Legislature repealed the ban on TAP for incarcerated students, a move poised to significantly increase incarcerated student enrollment in New York.[57] TAP covers tuition for students who are New York residents, which includes those incarcerated in NYS facilities who last resided outside of the state.[58]

Together with the reinstatement of Pell Grants, renewed access to TAP can help scale existing college-in-prison programming into a cohesive statewide prison education system with a variety of two- and four-year programs. Insight from CIP offers a blueprint for this expansion, as corrections systems adapt to a new era for prison education with many more students, in programs with similar standards for quality as those required by the Initiative.[59] College-in-prison programming is well positioned to increase access to high quality, postsecondary education for record numbers of historically underserved students, and as a result, can ameliorate longstanding individual challenges while simultaneously providing the foundation for dismantling greater, systemic barriers to opportunity, and contributing toward greater public safety for the broader community.

THE COLLEGE-IN-PRISON REENTRY INITIATIVE

During its implementation from Fall 2017 to Spring 2022, CIP expanded access to college education for individuals in NYS DOCCS facilities while addressing many of the systemic barriers students face in earning degrees and upon reentering the community. CIP had four principal aims, and demonstrated achievement for each of them.

1. Provide funding to local colleges and universities to enroll more students, offer more courses, and expand degree programs, including in facilities that previously did not offer college in prison.

- Over the course of the Initiative, seven education providers (including two new college providers) expanded college programs to four new correctional facilities, offering college instruction in 17 total facilities across New York.
- The Initiative also expanded the number and types of degree programs available in correctional facilities from 10 to 14 among CIP Providers, including four additional associate-level programs. Collectively, these enhancements allowed Providers to offer more diverse degree paths and courses in additional program facilities to serve more students, increasing opportunities for degree completion prior to release.
- Of the 86 students who completed their degrees, the majority (91 percent; N=78) did so by the time they returned home.
- In all, CIP served 931 students, and in so doing, helped increase DOCCS college enrollment capacity by approximately 35 percent to 1,493 students as of 2022.[60, 61]

2. Establish shared program/curricular standards, align common course requirements and offerings, and in so doing, enable the transfer of credits between funded programs and institutions.

- The Initiative created infrastructure to ensure continuity of learning so that more students could successfully finish their degrees if they were transferred to a different facility or released.

3. Strengthen the reentry support infrastructure.

- CIP led to more robust reentry efforts that supported continuation of academic programs and finding well-suited employment opportunities.

4. Exchange best practices and provide technical assistance for college in prison statewide.

- The Institute for Justice and Opportunity at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (Institute for Justice and Opportunity) and the State University of New York Higher Education for the Justice-Involved (SUNY HEJI) hosted three Learning Exchanges as well as another workshop on trauma-responsive educational practice in correctional settings.
- Providers engaged in other, informal opportunities to share information with each other as well as with the Institute for Justice and Opportunity, SUNY HEJI, and CUNY ISLG as a means of collective problem-solving and engaging in a broader community of practice.

To achieve these aims, CIP brought together multiple and diverse partners. Seven Education Providers (hereafter, "Providers") were funded via a competitive solicitation to provide instruction as part of Aim 1: Bard College, Cornell University, Medaille College, Mercy College, Mohawk Valley Community College (MVCC), New York University (NYU), and SUNY Jefferson.[62] The Institute for Justice and Opportunity[63] and SUNY HEJI together served as the Education and Reentry Coordinator and were responsible for Aims 2, 3, and 4.

FIGURE 1. NEW YORK STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES & PRESENCE OF CIP PROGRAMMING FROM 2017-2018

CIP Reentry Initiative Facility

1. Albion (Medaille)
2. Auburn (Cornell)
3. Cape Vincent (SUNY Jefferson)
4. Cayuga (Cornell)
5. Coxsackie (Bard)
6. Eastern (Bard)
7. Elmira (Cornell)
8. Fishkill (Bard)
9. Five Points (Cornell)
10. Gouverneur (SUNY Jefferson)
11. Green Haven (Bard)
12. Marcy (Mohawk Valley Community College)
13. Sing Sing (Mercy)
14. Taconic (Bard)
15. Wallkill (NYU)
16. Watertown (SUNY Jefferson)^
17. Woodbourne (Bard)

Non-CIP College Programming Facility

18. Adirondack
19. Attica
20. Bare Hill
21. Bedford Hills
22. Franklin
23. Great Meadow
24. Greene
25. Groveland
26. Mid-State
27. Mohawk
28. Otisville
29. Riverview
30. Shawangunk
31. Sullivan

No College Programming Facility

32. Altona
33. Clinton
34. Collins#
35. Downstate^
36. Edgecombe+
37. Gowanda^
38. Hale Creek
39. Hudson
40. Lakeview+
41. Moriah^
42. Ogdensburg^
43. Orleans
44. Queensboro
45. Rochester^
46. Southport^
47. Ulster+
48. Upstate
49. Washington#
50. Wende
51. Willard^
52. Wyoming#

+ Facilities are specialized (e.g., Shock, Drug Treatment, Reception, Work Release) and therefore are not eligible for college programming.

^ Facilities have closed as of the time of publication.

Facilities have college programs as of the time of publication, but did not when CIP began.

CUNY ISLG managed and coordinated CIP on behalf of the Manhattan District Attorney and worked with DOCCS, Providers, and the Education and Reentry Coordinator to address any issues and oversee the overall performance of the Initiative. CUNY ISLG's research team was responsible for conducting a process evaluation of the Initiative. In addition to CUNY ISLG's process evaluation, the Vera Institute of Justice was funded by the Manhattan District Attorney to conduct an outcome evaluation and cost-benefit analysis of CIP. The interim outcome evaluation report, released in late 2023, indicated a significant reduction in the risk of reconviction for CIP students compared to similar non-students. The final report is expected in autumn 2024. For a list of Initiative Stakeholders and description of each entity, refer to *Appendix 2*.

Given the new funding landscape with the reinstatement of Pell and TAP, this report[64] comes at an exciting time for prison education. CIP helped to boost the capacity of some existing programs and initiate new ones across facilities, but the demand for college in prison has continued to outpace the supply. As of Spring 2022, and thanks in large part to funding from Second Chance Pell, CIP, private foundations, and individual donors, 31 degree/certificate programs operate across 30 of the 44 NYS prisons, but many prisons report long waiting lists for programming[65] Pell and TAP reinstatement can help address the urgent need for program expansion, both in terms of scaling existing programs and implementing new programs in prisons throughout the state: access remains greater in downstate facilities, closer to New York City (see *Figure 1*).

Process Evaluation Overview

This final process evaluation report highlights key findings from the full implementation period of the Initiative over five academic years (i.e., from Fall 2017 to Spring 2022). CUNY ISLG designed a five-year, mixed-methods process evaluation to: 1. determine whether CIP was implemented as it was planned, 2. examine the partnerships and relationships that were developed and sustained, and 3. identify the factors that aided or hindered implementation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The evaluation[66] relied on both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Data collection was concentrated during two time periods of the five-year Initiative: early implementation (i.e., Summer 2018 through Spring 2019) and late implementation(i.e., Fall 2021 through Spring 2022), to examine changes over the implementation period.

CUNY ISLG coordinated with DOCCS and Providers to select seven correctional facilities to serve as research sites for data collection activities, and considered factors such as geography, security level, volume of students, gender served by the facility, feasibility of research activities, and whether the program was new or existed previously. The seven facilities ultimately selected to be part of the study include Albion (Medaille), Cape Vincent (SUNY Jefferson), Cayuga (Cornell), Eastern (Bard), Marcy (MVCC), Sing Sing (Mercy), and Wallkill (NYU) (see *Figure 1* above for a location of these facilities across New York).

This report presents CUNY ISLG's findings from data collection activities across the evaluation period, which included visits at the above named correctional facilities with CIP programs to observe classroom

instruction; interviews with DOCCS facility staff, Education Provider administrators, faculty, and other stakeholders; student focus groups; and student surveys. In addition to these research activities, CUNY ISLG regularly observed stakeholder meetings, convenings and check-in calls. CUNY ISLG also reviewed program materials, performance data, and qualitative reports submitted by Providers.

All research activities along with CUNY ISLG's analytical approach to the data are described in greater detail in *Appendix 3*.

Findings

CIP was a five-year effort to support historically under-resourced postsecondary degree programs in prisons and address longstanding systemic challenges throughout New York's college-in-prison landscape. Given CIP's unique goals not only to expand college in prison but also to enhance the systems critical for student success in these settings, the Initiative can be used as a blueprint for implementing and scaling similar programs quickly and effectively following Pell and TAP reinstatement in New York and in other parts of the country. To that end, the findings that follow are grouped into three substantive areas that broadly align with the first three principal aims of CIP: 1. Expanding Access to College in Prison; 2. Ensuring Instructional Quality, Alignment, and Transferability; and 3. Improving and Expanding Reentry. The fourth aim regarding technical assistance, which was more procedural in practice, was integrated with the other three aims, and therefore is not a direct focus of this report.

Findings suggest that CIP successfully enabled Providers to increase access to higher education in New York by expanding student enrollment, the variety of course and degree offerings, as well as the number of facilities offering college

instruction. Overall, CIP was well-received by students, faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders. While curricula and program standards mirrored that of on-campus institutions, the COVID-19 pandemic required Providers to reassess and re-envision their instructional methods and program provision in an environment that was already restrictive (i.e., correctional settings). In addition, findings indicate that stakeholders worked collaboratively to create reentry supports with regard to education, employment, and other needs for students preparing for release to the community. As such, this final process evaluation report also provides important and necessary insights and context for Vera's outcome evaluation examining the Initiative's impact on reentry. Finally, the report concludes with a summary of recommendations for educational providers, corrections, and other stakeholders preparing to expand college-in-prison programs in New York and across the country.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO COLLEGE IN PRISON

The Initiative's principal aim was to expand access to individuals in NYS prisons seeking to pursue postsecondary education opportunities and in so doing, enhance the possibility of successful reentry into the community. Access to education is an essential component of equity. By making college-level education available in prison settings, the Initiative helped to improve incarcerated people's quality of life, repair harms caused by lack of access to equal or adequate education prior to their incarceration, and enhanced their prospects for a successful reentry experience in terms of education, employment, and overall well-being post-release. This section begins by detailing the expansion of college in prison during the course of the Initiative and is followed by a discussion of eligibility for participation in CIP (see *Eligibility for the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative*). Then, the section continues with an overview of the CIP student population with respect to race, age, prior criminal legal system involvement, and other relevant demographic characteristics (see *Enrollment in the*

Initiative). Lastly, the section concludes with a description of CIP course offerings and students' degree progress and completion (see *Coursework and Degree Completion*).

Expansion of College in Prison

Providers contributed toward expansion efforts in three key ways. First, Providers enrolled students in degree programs up to specified enrollment targets. For example, Providers established new programs, expanded programs to new facilities, and scaled up existing programs. Specifically, one of the seven Providers only began offering college in prison after being selected for CIP, and another had offered courses but did not confer degrees. Two of the Providers offered five new degree/certificate programs, and the other five Providers proposed to continue offering 10 other existing degree programs. In addition, the seven Providers proposed to expand programs to four new facilities and scale up programs in 13 existing facilities. Lastly, Providers offered degree-eligible coursework each semester to enable students to complete their

degrees in a reasonable time period while incarcerated, and supported students in rigorous programs until they completed their degrees, were released into the community, or otherwise exited the program.

CIP considerably expanded access to college-in-prison programming across New York, with all Providers serving students at volumes at, or even exceeding, their targets.[67] Although no Providers operated exclusively with CIP funds, a few attributed the sustainability of their college-in-prison programs to CIP funding. As one Provider explained, "it [the additional funding] allows us to do more than just the bare minimum." Thanks to CIP as well as Second Chance Pell and private philanthropy, there are 31 degree/certificate programs across more than 30 institutions of higher education operating across 30 of the 44 state prisons as of the publication of this report.[68]

Through the Initiative, all Providers were able to cover tuition costs for more incarcerated students than they had previously; one institution reported that they were able to double the number of enrolled students in their program. A few Providers used CIP funds to hire additional faculty and administrative staff to support these new students. In the year prior to CIP, 1,106 incarcerated individuals in NYS were enrolled in college-level instruction at any given time, and the waitlists for existing programs demonstrated the demand for additional program capacity. As of 2022, after the implementation of the College-in-Prison Initiative, capacity was around 1,500 students (see *Figure 2*).[69]

FIGURE 2. NUMBER OF NYS INCARCERATED STUDENTS ENROLLED IN COLLEGE DURING FALL SEMESTERS FROM 2016 TO 2021, BY CIP-FUNDED STATUS
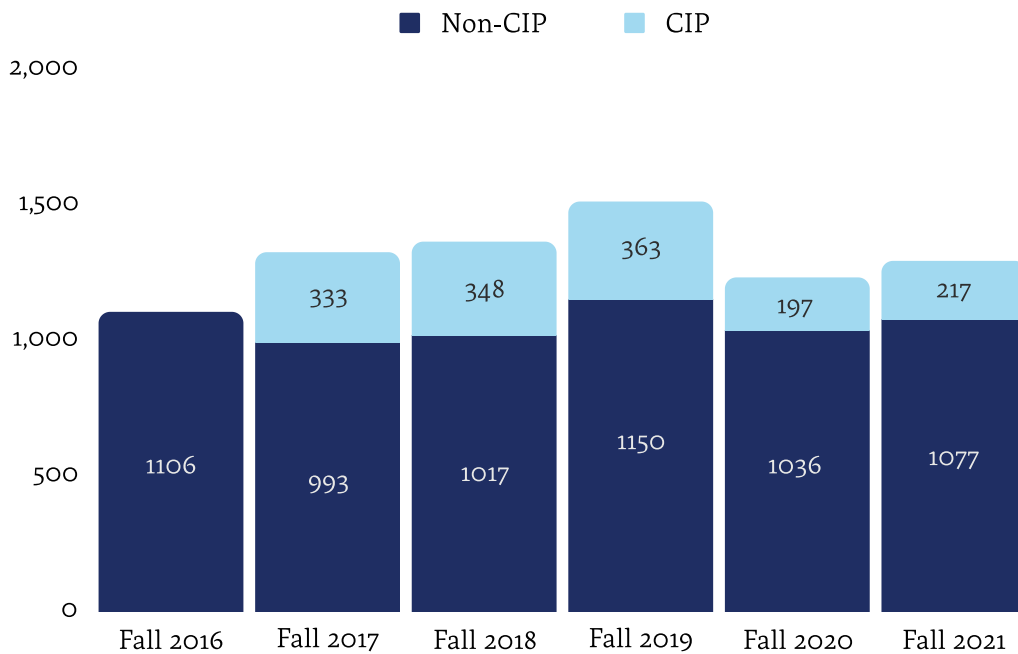
Note: Fall 2022 is not included in the above figure as CUNY ISLG does not have data to distinguish between CIP and non-CIP students given that implementation of the initiative ended in Spring 2022. The total student enrollment (i.e., students who had been supported by CIP and non-CIP students) in college during the Fall 2022 semester was 1,493 students.

Eligibility for the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative

CIP imposed the following eligibility requirements: students needed a high school diploma or high school equivalency (HSE) to enroll; have no disqualifying disciplinary infractions; and be within 1.5-5.5 years from their earliest scheduled release date (ESRD or ERD)[70] at the time of enrollment. Upon enrollment, around 12 percent (n=107) of students had earned a high school diploma and 57 percent (n=532) had earned their HSE or GED. Around 7 percent (n=64) had some prior college experience in the community, and another 20 percent (n=187) had

been enrolled in college in prison prior to their current program. A small number (2 percent; n=19) had already earned a postsecondary degree, in most cases an associate's degree. None had disqualifying disciplinary incidents, as DOCCS flags these students as ineligible prior to enrollment.

As determined by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the ERD requirement reflected CIP's emphasis on planning for reentry and the goal of engaging in an amount of coursework prior to release to ensure that even when students could not complete their degrees while incarcerated, they would have made substantial degree progress in order to earn

FIGURE 3. AGGREGATE MINIMUM & MAXIMUM SENTENCE AMONG CIP STUDENTS (N=924)
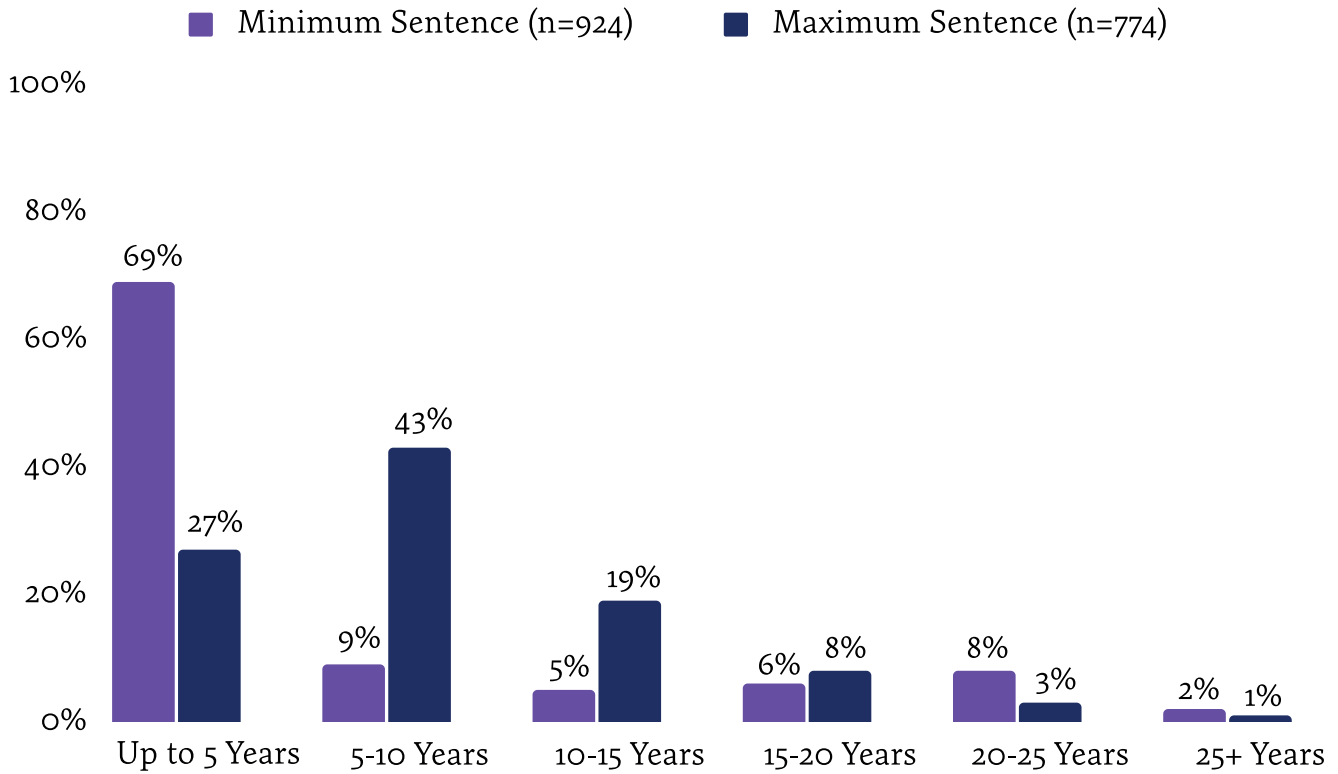
Source: DOCCS
Note: Data on maximum aggregate sentence for 155 students is not reported in *Figure 3* because their maximum sentences were life imprisonment. Data on minimum aggregate sentences are missing for seven students.

their degrees after release.[71] DOCCS calculates sentence time for each incarcerated individual in its custody.[72] These calculations include an earliest release date (i.e., the minimum sentence) and, if applicable, maximum sentence. Approximately one-third (31 percent; n=282) of CIP students had minimum aggregate sentences of five years or fewer, and over one-quarter (27 percent; n=206) had maximum aggregate sentences of the same length. Seventy percent of students had maximum aggregate sentences of 10 years or fewer (*see Figure 3*), indicating that a large majority of students would eventually be incarcerated for between 0-10 years.

The average student still enrolled at the end of Spring 2022 (n=282) was estimated to have a total expected sentence length of nearly 13 years (see *Figure 4*). On average, students enrolled in CIP had been incarcerated for almost nine years and had approximately four years remaining on their custodial sentence at the time of enrollment. With regard to all students who had been released over the course of the Initiative (n=295), the average student was incarcerated for just over nine years.

FIGURE 4. EXPECTED TOTAL SENTENCE LENGTH AMONG CIP STUDENTS ENROLLED AS OF END OF SPRING 2022 (N=273)

- 25+ Years 5%
- 20-25 Years 13%
- 0-5 Years 16%
- 15-20 Years 14%
- 5-10 Years 29%
- 10-15 Years 22%
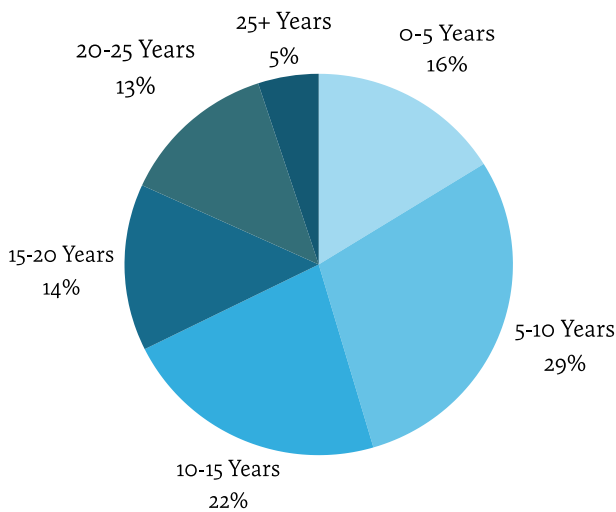
Source: DOCCS

FIGURE 5. CIP STUDENTS BY EARLIEST SCHEDULED RELEASE DATE (ERD) AT ENROLLMENT (N=931)

- Unknown 4%
- 5.5+ Years 6%
- 4.5-5.5 Years 11%
- Less than 1.5 years 16%
- 1.5-2.49 Years 24%
- 3.5-4.49 Years 19%
- 2.5-3.49 Years 20%
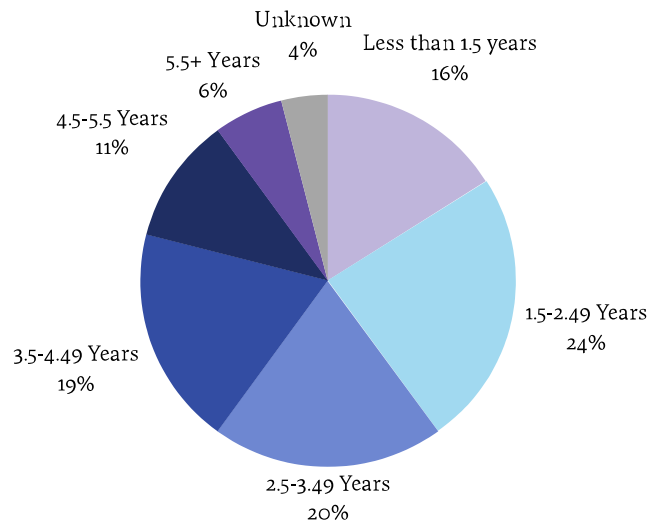
Source: DOCCS

Approximately 74 percent (n=690) of students met the Initiative's ERD eligibility criterion (see *Figure 5*).[73] Specifically, around one-quarter (n=226) were 1.5-2.5 years from release at the time of enrollment, one-fifth (n=188) were 2.5-3.5 years from release, one-fifth (n=178) were 3.5-4.5 years from release, and 11 percent (n=98) were 4.5-5.5 years from release. Most of the students who fell outside of the eligibility range had less than 1.5 years remaining until their earliest possible release. The proportion of students having less than 1.5 years until their earliest release date (16 percent; n=150) may have been driven by the higher proportion of medium security facilities (i.e., 10 facilities) compared to maximum security facilities (i.e., seven facilities) in which CIP programs operated, where students would typically have longer sentences. Indeed, over three-quarters (78 percent) of CIP students were housed in medium security facilities compared to maximum (22 percent).

With regard to admissions, each Provider maintained its own process for identifying, assessing, and enrolling new students. To deal with constraints on capacity, a few Providers operated wait lists, whereas others suspended applications until program space opened up, demonstrating the persistent demand for these

programs. As part of application processes, most Providers required potential students to interview with Provider faculty or staff, but many also required a placement exam or a written essay; mandatory remedial, pre-college coursework, which could be waived if students were transferring credits from other college coursework; and/or a formal, written application to the Provider program.

Initially, most Providers reported some level of difficulty applying CIP eligibility criteria to their applicant review process. Many Providers were confused about how to use a student's ERD as an eligibility criterion, or at which point the criterion applied.[74] In so doing, this led to cases of eventual enrollment of ineligible students (i.e., those more than 5.5 years from their ERD or less than 1.5 years from their ERD). One of these Providers noted that they sometimes

> *"only find out about [possible ineligibility] a day or an hour before orientation. It's somewhat clumsy, because we, as educators, do not have as much access to institutional records [at the local DOCCS facility]."*

Additionally, several Providers reported difficulties accurately estimating students' ERDs. Although online DOCCS records include current ERDs for all people under its custody, a few of these Providers felt that DOCCS' administrative information on student ERDs was often more up-to-date than the ERD that was publicly available on the DOCCS website. Furthermore, a few Providers noted that it was difficult to accurately assess ERDs due to the Limited Credit Time Allowances (LCTA) benefit, a DOCCS policy that awards people sentenced on certain eligible offenses[75] a six-month reduction in their sentence if they accomplish one of several correctional programming goals, including participating in two or more years of college coursework.[76] This policy affects individuals' ERD, which necessarily has implications for students' reentry. Despite good faith efforts, uncertainty surrounding ERD eligibility led

to considerable confusion for stakeholders, particularly early in implementation of the Initiative.

Challenges in using the ERD to determine CIP eligibility arose most often in facilities housing people who primarily fell outside of the ERD eligibility window. Providers and other stakeholders noted that the ERD requirement disadvantaged maximum security facilities, as many individuals in those facilities were serving sentences with more than 5.5 years remaining on their sentences. Conversely, one Provider reported working at a facility housing people who were scheduled to be released relatively soon, and said it was difficult to recruit prospective students who were 1.5 years or more away from their ERD.

Although most Providers reported at least some difficulty determining student eligibility based on ERD, a few reported successful partnerships with DOCCS facilities that helped mitigate these challenges. In these instances, Providers and DOCCS facility staff established open lines of communication to ensure all stakeholders maintained a shared understanding of how CIP eligibility is determined and reduce unnecessary back and forth with students who were not eligible for funding.

Enrollment in the Initiative

Providers served a combination of students who were already enrolled in some college in prison (particularly early in CIP), as well as those who were new to college coursework. From Fall 2017 through Spring 2022, CIP served 931 unique incarcerated students, 84 percent of who (n=780) had never before taken college coursework and 16 percent (n=151) who had enrolled in courses prior to the start of CIP. This total aligns with the initial estimates of 800-1,000 students[77,78] who would be supported during the Initiative, with the understanding that most students would be supported across multiple years.

The CIP Student Population

The CIP student population was largely representative of the incarcerated population in New York, and therefore looked quite different than the larger population of college students in community settings.[79] In this way, the Initiative expanded access to college for students who are often underrepresented in college settings: older students, students of color, and students with criminal convictions. Notably, students in CIP did not pay tuition and did not take out loans in order to fund their education, which makes the pursuit of education more equitable and more accessible.

From Fall 2017 through Spring 2022, CIP served 931 unique incarcerated students, 84 percent of who (n=780) had never before taken college coursework.

With respect to age, none of the students were between the age of 18 and 20, which is what one may consider to be of "traditional" age for enrollment in a college program; additionally, less than 1 percent of students were under the age of 24. This stands in stark contrast to national figures for college enrollment in the 2021-2022 academic year, as two-thirds (or 65 percent) of students are aged 24 or younger.[80] One reason for the higher age composition of CIP students is that having a high school diploma or GED/HSE is a requirement to participate in college instruction.[81] Young people entering correctional facilities historically have had limited educational opportunities and are likely to have not yet earned their GED/HSE. Per DOCCS protocols, anyone entering facilities without these are required to participate in, and complete, GED/HSE-level instruction. By the time they complete this requirement, students are typically at least 21 or even significantly older.

The average age of CIP students was 40, with about half (47 percent; n=435) of students ages 40 or older (see *Figure 6*). This aligns with expectations given that the average age of an incarcerated person in New York is also 40 years old.[82] Overall, younger students were underrepresented in the CIP population, but middle-aged students were overrepresented, which is advantageous considering many of these individuals will still be of working age upon release. Additionally, older students were underrepresented in CIP, though this is unsurprising given the age distribution of college students in the community. Lastly, about one-fifth (18 percent; n=165) of students were over the age of 50, compared to 24 percent in the total incarcerated population,[83] indicating older, adult learners are slightly underrepresented in college-in prison programming.

FIGURE 6. AGE OF CIP STUDENTS AND TOTAL DOCCS POPULATION

Source: DOCCS
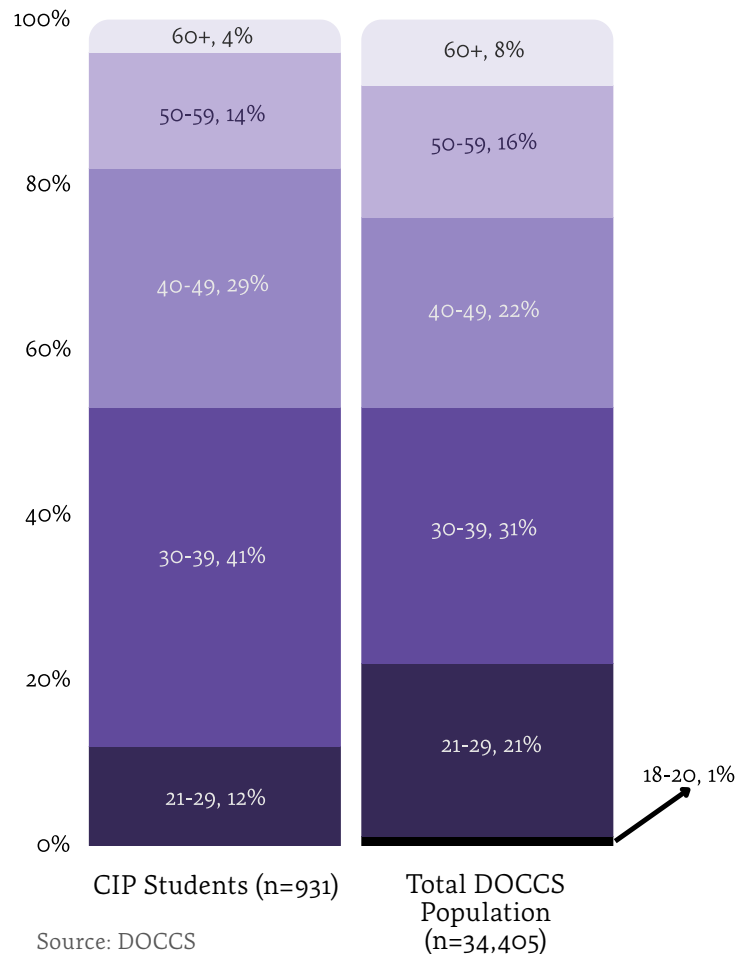
CIP students were broadly representative of the population in DOCCS custody with respect to race. Half of CIP students were Black/African American (50 percent; n=468), one-quarter (26 percent; n=243) were white, and 17 percent (n=161) were Hispanic (See *Figure 7*). Overall, this closely aligns with the racial distribution of incarcerated persons in DOCCS facilities, with the exception of Hispanic students, who were slightly underrepresented in the Initiative (17 percent of students when compared to 24 percent of incarcerated individuals across DOCCS facilities).[84] When compared to demographic characteristics of students on college campuses in the community across the state, CIP students were more likely to be Black, and less likely to be white and Hispanic.

FIGURE 7. RACE OF CIP STUDENTS AND TOTAL DOCCS POPULATION

Source: DOCCS
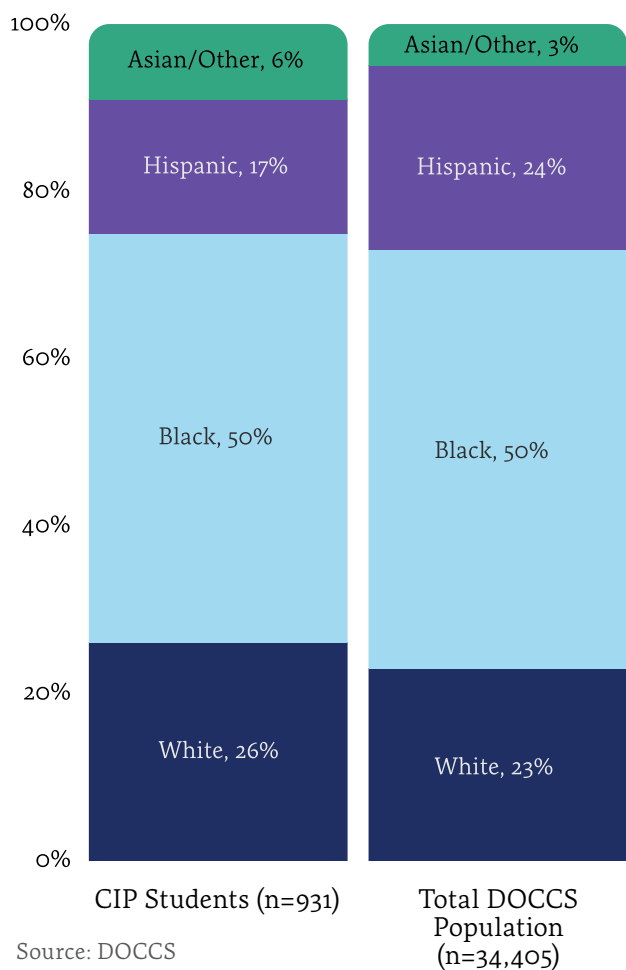
At New York colleges in the 2021-2022 academic year, only 15 percent of students were Black while 48 percent of NYS college students were white and 25 percent were Hispanic.[85] Asian students were underrepresented in the CIP population relative to colleges in the community: only 1 percent of the CIP population compared to 13 percent of the New York college population.[86]

Additionally, female students were overrepresented relative to the DOCCS population overall, as only 4 percent of incarcerated persons in NYS DOCCS facilities identify as female, but they comprised 18 percent (n=172) of CIP students. The overrepresentation of female students in the CIP student population can likely be attributed to the fact that most CIP facilities were medium-security (65 percent, or 10 of 17), and female facilities are disproportionately likely to be medium security;[87] overall, 2 of the 17 (12 percent) CIP facilities were female.[88]

Among CIP students, nearly two-thirds (61 percent; n=566) were incarcerated for nonviolent felony offenses as their highest conviction charge. These include crimes such as burglary, fraud, and possession of a controlled substance. The remaining 39 percent (n=358) of students were serving sentences for violent offenses, such as assault, kidnapping, and murder.[89,90] By comparison, 74 percent of the general custodial population in the state is serving a sentence for a violent felony.[91] In New York, felony offenses are classified by the severity of the crime and length of incarceration. Class A-I and A-II felonies are considered to be the most severe and can carry a maximum sentence of life without the possibility of parole. Felonies also include Class B, C, D and E, with felonies classified as the least severe.[92]

FIGURE 8. FELONY OFFENSE TYPES AMONG CIP STUDENTS (N=924)
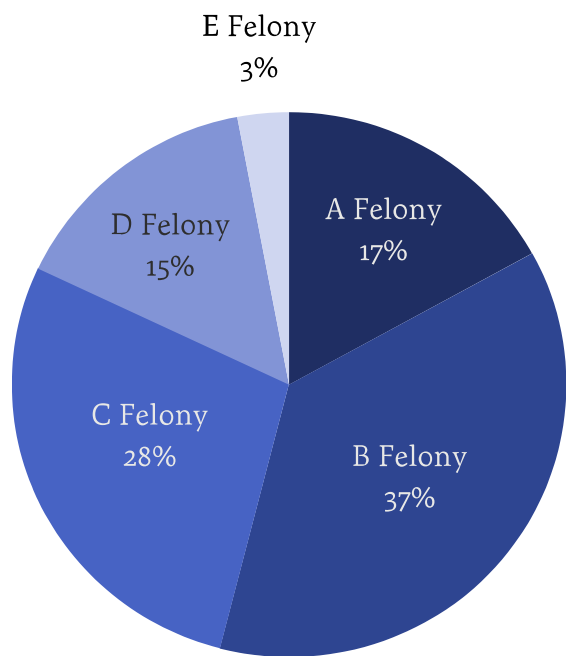
Source: DOCCS
Note: Data on highest felony charge are missing for seven students.

Examining CIP students' highest conviction charges, just under one-fifth of students (17 percent; n=155) were convicted of A-I and A-II felonies (see *Figure 8*). The majority of students (65 percent; n=597) had Class B (37 percent; n=339) and C felonies (28 percent; n=258). The remaining 18 percent (n=169) of students were convicted of Class D (15 percent; n=142) and Class E felonies (3 percent; n=27).[93]

With regard to prior involvement with the criminal legal system, approximately half of students (54 percent; n=499) had felony convictions prior to their most recent incarceration compared to 46 percent of students (n=425) who did not. Among those with prior felony convictions (n=499), about 42 percent (n=208) had one prior conviction; a little more than one quarter (27 percent; n=133) had two prior convictions; 13 percent (n=64) had three prior convictions; and about one-fifth (19 percent; n=94) had four or more prior convictions (see *Figure 9*).

FIGURE 9. PRIOR FELONY CONVICTIONS AMONG CIP STUDENTS (N=929)
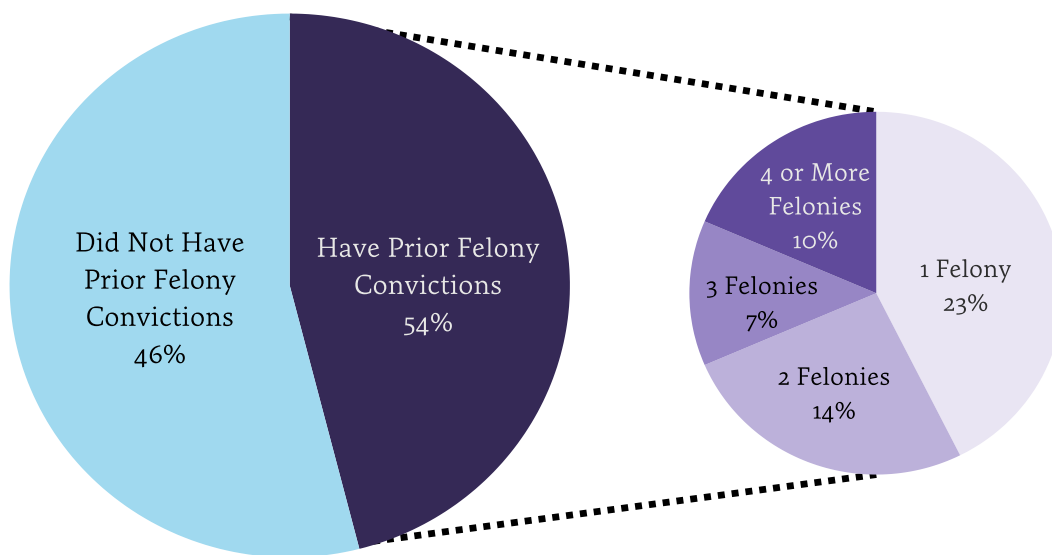
Source: DOCCS

Almost half (42 percent; n=389) of all CIP students were from New York City (NYC) boroughs. One-fifth (21 percent) were from the surrounding NYC metropolitan area (15 percent Hudson Valley and 6 percent Long Island), and one-third (33 percent) were from upstate regions (17 percent Central New York and 16 percent Western New York [see *Figure 10*]).[94]

FIGURE 10. LAST PLACE OF RESIDENCE AMONG CIP STUDENTS AND TOTAL DOCCS POPULATION

Outside NY/Unknown, 4%

	CIP Students (n=931)	Total DOCCS Population (n=34,405)
Central NY	17%	17%
Western NY	16%	18%
Hudson Valley	15%	17%
Long Island	6%	8%
NYC	42%	41%
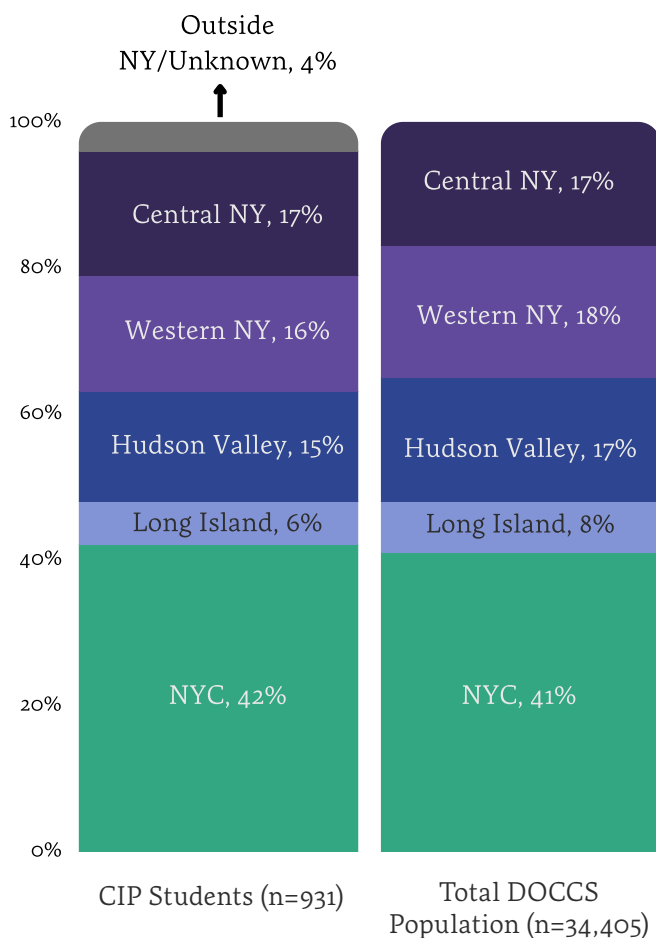
Although the Initiative's funding was from a Manhattan-based government agency, CIP was open to, and successful in reaching, students from throughout New York. The geographic distribution of CIP students largely aligned with the DOCCS incarcerated population, as a whole: 41 percent of incarcerated persons were from NYC boroughs, one-quarter from the surrounding NYC areas (25 percent) and just over one-third were from upstate regions (35 percent).[95] In all, although representatively distributed, a higher proportion of students last resided in NYC and surrounding regions, not only demonstrating the need for more reentry resources in these areas, but also those tailored to these specific populations. Nonetheless, reentry resources are relatively lacking in other areas of the state.

Expanding New Facilities, Establishing New Programs and Degrees, and Scaling Up Programs

In an effort to expand access to college in prison for students overall, the Initiative encouraged Providers to establish programs in facilities without them; offer new degree programs; and otherwise expand capacity within their existing degree programs. Five of the seven CIP Providers already awarded postsecondary degrees when CIP was launched, whereas one was returning to this work after an earlier program in a different facility, and another offered degrees for the first time. In addition, of the 17 facilities[96] proposed to offer CIP programs, 13 had existing postsecondary programs, whereas four did not. By Spring 2019, as planned, college in prison had been introduced in all four of the new facilities and scaled up in the remaining 13 facilities.

In terms of degree programs, two of the seven Providers proposed to develop new degree/certificate programs. Of the five new degree programs proposed, three were ultimately implemented and the other two were not; of these two, one was in the process of being developed but was not

pursued after COVID-19. The other 10 existing degree programs continued to be offered as part of CIP over the course of the Initiative.

Coursework and Degree Completion

CIP aimed to enable students to complete their degrees within a timeframe comparable to students in the community. The specific number of credits earned each semester toward degree completion varied by program, degree type, and student, but Providers were required to offer at least four courses per year, with each course equivalent to between three to five credits that could be applied toward students' degree programs.

Course Offerings

Providers offered 498 unique courses over the course of the Initiative, including entry-level courses such as Introduction to Psychology and more advanced courses such as Multivariate Calculus (see *Appendix 6* for a summary of CIP courses offered).[97] With the CIP funding, the majority of Providers noted that they were able to offer more courses than they were previously. For example, one Provider noted increasing its course offerings from two to seven courses per semester as a result of CIP funding.

Providers offered 498 unique courses over the course of the Initiative, including entry-level courses such as Introduction to Psychology and more advanced courses such as Multivariate Calculus.

Providers most frequently offered courses related to social science, literature, and writing mechanics. This pattern aligns with the degree types and degrees offered by most of the Providers (i.e., liberal arts and general

education). Only 17 percent of all CIP courses offered to date related to science, technology, and mathematics. Although all Providers offered mathematics courses, nearly two-thirds (62 percent) were at the introductory or remedial level. In addition, whereas two Providers offered computer-related courses, only one of these provided intermediate- or advanced level instruction, such as on web development, media design, and Python programming. Last, Providers offered relatively few courses related to the arts, music, and physical education, and these in general were limited to the more longstanding programs. Conversely, newer programs (and those administered by public, versus private, institutions) tended to offer only introductory wellness courses within these disciplines.

In focus groups, many students reported satisfaction with classes overall. Whereas introductory and core curricula, such as English 101, were offered by all Providers, students in all focus groups expressed a desire for more courses and a greater variety of courses to fulfill their degree paths and satisfy other areas of curiosity. Even students from two of the larger, more established programs—who were able to participate in courses not offered by smaller or newer programs, such as food science, public health, and journalism—still asked for other courses related to theater arts, music, engineering, and political science.

Students in all programs echoed the lack of mathematics courses in particular, especially those that would enhance skills useful for life after release. "We need a mathematics course for our degree," one student explained, "but they only offer algebra, which isn't as useful as accounting." Likewise, students from most focus groups reported an interest in additional science and technology courses, which they perceived as more practical for day-to-day living and for future employment. Students noted two primary barriers to accessing such courses in correctional settings. First, DOCCS security policies preclude certain lab activities that

are often conducted on-campus. For example, incarcerated students are not permitted to handle potentially harmful tools or substances, such as scalpels and acidic chemicals.

Furthermore, most college-in-prison programs have limited access to computers and advanced software, both of which are required for most technology-centered courses, such as computer science or statistics (see *Classroom and Learning Resources*). The number and variety of courses in mathematics, science, and technology seemed to increase in the second half of the Initiative; for example, a few Providers were able to offer introductory earth science or plant biology courses in a correctional setting for the first time. Two Providers began to offer 200-level computer science courses as well, but these were Providers with established computer labs prior to CIP and thus were already accustomed to and in compliance with DOCCS' security protocols. Although Providers aimed to provide college-in-prison instruction that mirrored the courses on community campuses, most reported challenges balancing standard course requirements with the demands of a correctional setting.

Students in a few focus groups indicated frustration with the limited volume/schedule of courses and the limited degree programs, particularly students who were nearing graduation. One student enrolled in an Associate's program explained that they only needed five more courses to complete their degree, but those courses had not been offered by the Provider. "There aren't enough classes to earn 60 credits," the student explained. Students in another focus group also suggested that courses could be scheduled in a more intentional way; for instance, some students were advised by Providers to enroll in an advanced psychology course despite the prerequisite introductory class not having been provided in previous semesters. In addition, students from a few focus groups in programs that offered associate's degrees

were also interested in bachelor's degree programs to continue their educational growth. "Whatever field you're in," one student explained, "you're always going to want to improve." Although most students spoke highly of their programs, the lack of course variety and, at times, the counterintuitive scheduling of classes interfered with their ability to enroll in the necessary courses to progress toward degree completion.

In addition, students from a few focus groups in programs that offered associate's degrees were also interested in bachelor's degree programs to continue their educational growth. "Whatever field you're in," one student explained, "you're always going to want to improve."

Degree Progress and Completion

The more generous course offerings through CIP enabled students to make significant progress towards completing their degrees. On average, students earned around seven credits per semester. The average associate's degree student earned 40 percent of the credits required for their degree, and the average bachelor's degree student earned 57 percent of required credits (see *Figure 11*). Students who participated in CIP were able to earn their degrees a) substantially prior to their release, at which point they either exited the CIP program or enrolled in a more advanced degree (e.g., a bachelor's degree if they first completed their associate's degree and their facility also offered a bachelor's degree) but remain in DOCCS custody; b) around the time of release, at which point they completed the program as well

as exit DOCCS custody; or c) post-release, after they exited DOCCS custody. On average, students still enrolled as of Spring 2022 had an estimated four years remaining on their sentence, which may not be sufficient time to complete degrees prior to release.

The average associate's degree student earned 40 percent of the credits required for their degree, and the average bachelor's degree student earned 57 percent of required credits.

FIGURE 11. AVERAGE DEGREE PROGRESS OF CIP STUDENTS, BY DEGREE TYPE

Legend: ■ % of Credits Earned ■ % of Credits Remaining

	AA/AS (All; n=769)	AA/AS (All Released; n=203)	BA/BS (All; n=113)	BA/BS (All Released; n=65)
% of Credits Remaining	60%	49%	43%	41%
% of Credits Earned	40%	51%	57%	59%
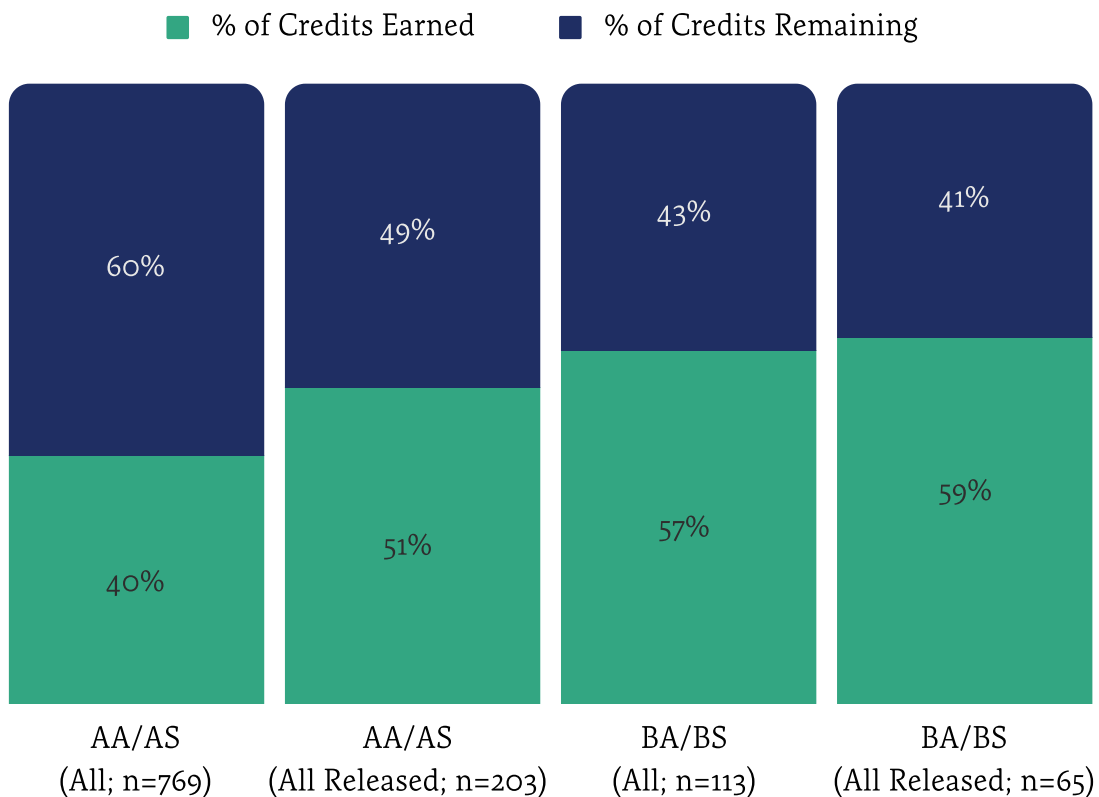
Through Spring 2022, a total of 648 students or 70 percent of the total CIP student population exited the program, including: 30 whom completed their degrees and remained incarcerated, 48 who completed them around the time of their release, 230 who were released from DOCCS custody without completing their degrees, and another 17 who were released, but for whom data on degree completion are missing (see *Figure 12*).

Half of students who earned their degrees and remained incarcerated were white, compared to about one-third (30 percent) who were Black. By comparison, 75 percent of those who had earned their degrees upon release were Black, while only 6 percent were white. Among people who were released without completing, eight students had re-enrolled in the community and completed their degrees within 12 months of reentry. Six of these students were Black, while the other two were white.

FIGURE 12. COMPLETION STATUS OF CIP STUDENTS AS OF SPRING 2022 (N=931)
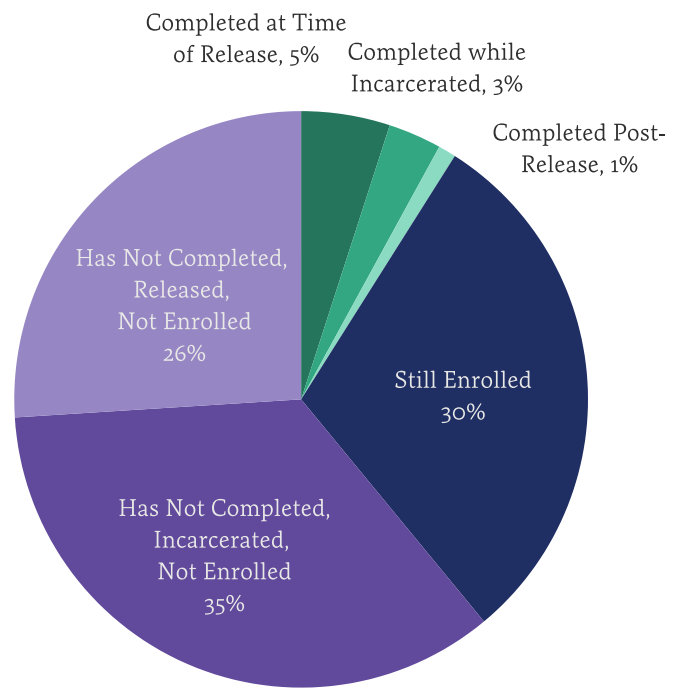
FIGURE 13. DEGREE COMPLETION OF CIP STUDENTS, BY RACE (N=925)
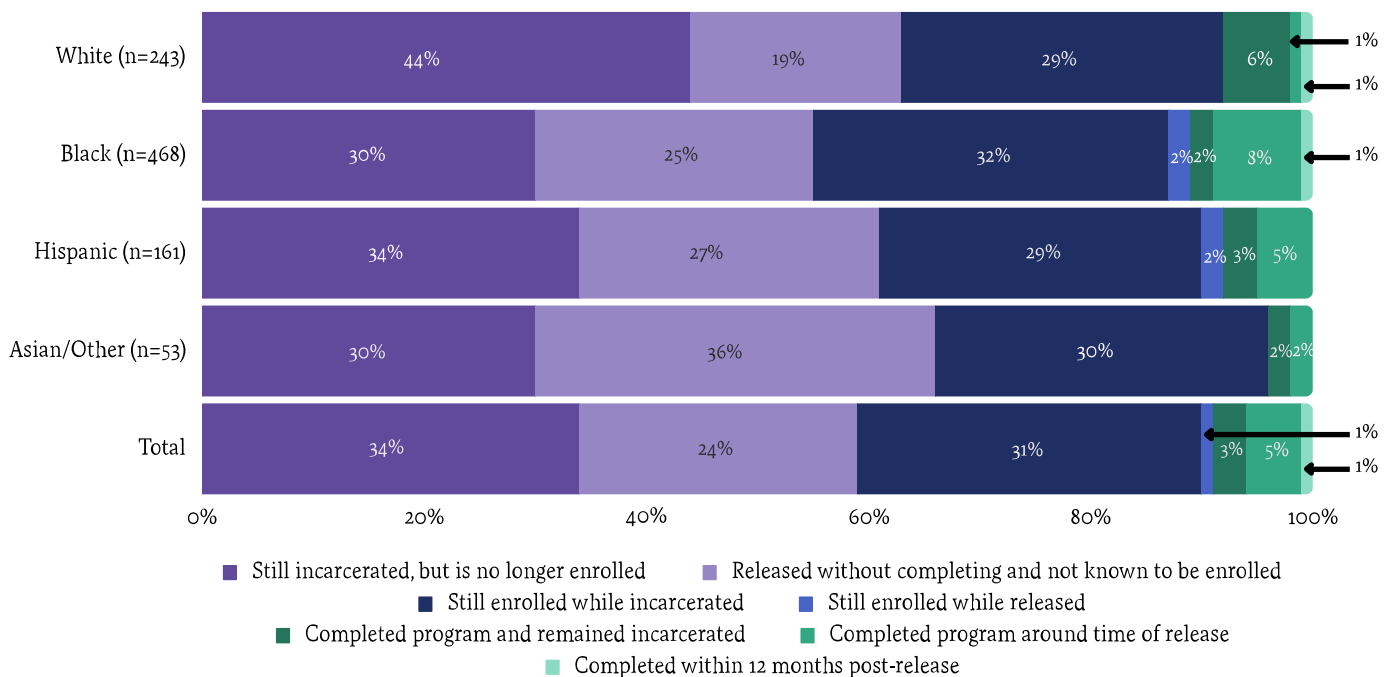
Note: Data on program completion are missing for 17 released students. For the purposes of our analyses, these students are considered non-completers.

More often than not, students released prior to Spring 2022 did not complete their college programs by their release date (see *Coursework and Degree Completion* section above). Students in the AA/AS and BA/BS paths who were released without completing their degree had earned about half (45 percent) of their required credits on average. Overall, 27 percent (n=247) of all CIP students exited due to release prior to degree completion. Further, although no disparities in overall degree completion among racial or ethnic groups were identified, there were meaningful differences with regard to when students reached completion. White students (6 percent) were more likely than Black students (2 percent) to finish their degree earlier during their incarceration (i.e., complete the program and remain incarcerated).[98] Alternatively, Black students (8 percent) were more likely than white students (1 percent) to have their degrees conferred just around the time of their release.[99] As context, 3 percent of students overall completed the program during their incarceration, and 5 percent had degrees conferred upon release (see *Figure 13*). When examining primary reason for program exit (see *Figure 14*), Hispanic (30 percent) and Black (28 percent) students were more likely than white students (19 percent) to have been released without having earned their degrees.[100]

Review of program exit data also helped to identify any possible disparities in attrition rates. Aside from release, common reasons students exited the program included facility transfers, voluntary drop outs and disciplinary reasons. Overall, there were no clear patterns in types of exits across racial and ethnic groups. Notably, 9 percent of all students exited for disciplinary reasons; however, white students (14 percent) were more likely than Black students (5 percent) to be removed for disciplinary infractions.[101] The racial distribution of program exits aligns with that of all CIP students served to date, with Hispanic students still slightly underrepresented. This demonstrates that students are exiting the program proportionately across racial groups and that the Initiative was consistent in serving those most impacted by the criminal legal system (see *Figure 14*).[102]

FIGURE 14. CIP PROGRAM ENROLLMENT STATUS OF CIP STUDENTS AS OF SPRING 2022, BY RACE (N=924)
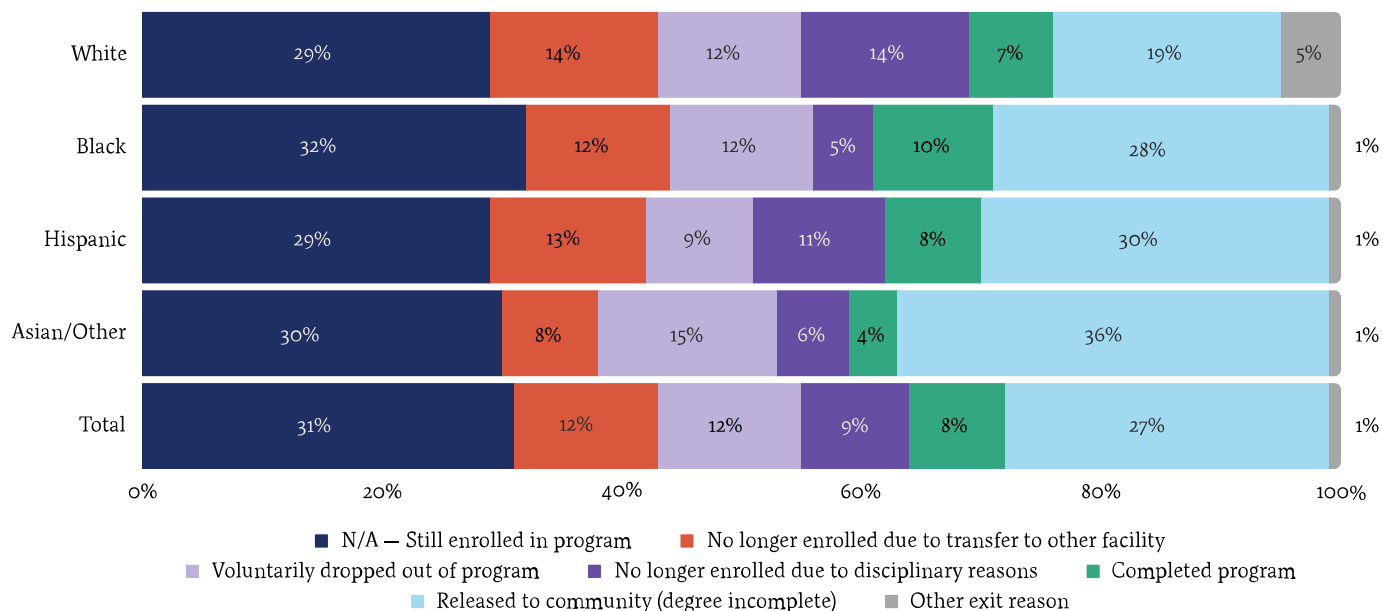
"Note: Data on race/ethnicity for one student who exited due to facility transfer.

ENSURING HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION, ALIGNMENT, AND TRANSFERABILITY

In addition to expanding access to college-level instruction, CIP sought to ensure that college in prison was of comparable quality to instruction offered in more traditional settings (i.e., in the community) and in so doing, enable the alignment of course offerings and standards and efficient transfer across postsecondary correctional education programs offered throughout New York. In this context, ensuring access to high-quality college education included addressing gaps from students' prior educational experiences and supporting other academic needs particular to pursuing a college education while incarcerated. This section first describes the effort to provide high-quality college education in prison and the methods that stakeholders devised to ensure that the experience is of quality despite the limitations of the prison setting (see *Provide High-Quality Instruction*). The subsequent section details the collaboration between Providers and establishment of standards across programs and facilities to both ensure high quality across programs and increase ease of transferring between them (see *Ensuring Program Standards* and *Improving Student Transfers Between Programs*).

Provide High-Quality Instruction

Providers and students largely perceived the curriculum used in facilities to be rigorous and/or comparable to programs in the community. One Provider operating a longstanding program stated that curriculum standards were particularly high in New York: "College in prison in New York resembles…college in New York [outside prison] more than in any other state of the US, which is to say that quality and content resemble [that on the outside] more closely than anywhere else." Notably, every faculty member interviewed described feeling privileged to work with CIP students who they found to be more engaged in class, to be highly motivated, and to not take their education for granted, compared to traditional students on college campuses. One faculty member noted,

"When I teach at the [non-prison] campus, I feel like it's just another class for them, a stepping stone to something else. They're happy to do the work, but doesn't register further than a grade. At [the prison facility], they are so invested; they are so hungry to learn and to get feedback and be exposed to new ideas."

CIP students, in turn, described how they had been changed by the college experience. One said: "I feel a change being around people who hold degrees. Having these professional conversations is something I strive for," and described a sense of belonging in an academic setting, saying "I feel like I belong in the room, too." Furthermore, in CIP courses, students performed at a high standard throughout the Initiative, with average semesterly GPAs above 3.0 for all Providers with the exception of Spring and Summer 2020 during the onset of COVID-19, when GPAs dropped precipitously as Providers worked to pivot their academic programs toward remote instruction (e.g., WebEx or correspondence) or cancel the semester altogether. To be sure, the pandemic placed a great amount of stress on Providers as well as the students, as they navigated the uncertainties and shifts in instruction. Promisingly, after Fall 2020, student GPAs bounced back to pre-COVID levels (see *Figure 15*).

In CIP courses, students performed at a high standard throughout the Initiative, with average semesterly GPAs above 3.0 for all Providers with the exception of Spring and Summer 2020 during the onset of COVID-19.

FIGURE 15. AVERAGE SEMESTERLY GPA OF CIP STUDENTS, BY SEMESTER (N=931)

CUNY Institute for State & Local Governance
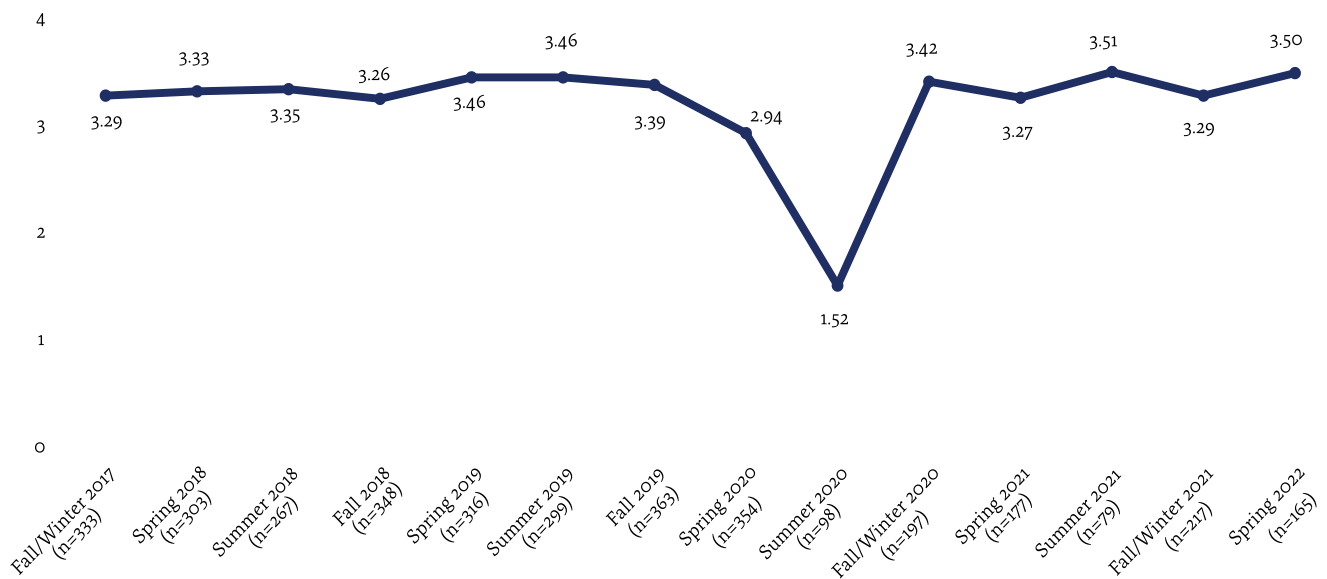
Notably, while GPAs bounced back in the Fall 2020 semester, enrollment, which declined starting in Summer 2020, did not fully recover to pre-COVID levels (see *Figure 16*). The proportion of new students substantially declined following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Spring 2020 semester for several reasons. First, DOCCS facilities were required to restrict access to essential personnel only, which interrupted facility operations. Activities that were deemed non-essential were paused indefinitely, forcing college programs to either quickly pivot to remote instruction to complete the Spring 2020 semester, or suspend classes altogether. These changes resulted in some students taking multiple additional months to finish the Spring 2020 semester, often via correspondence, and also forced some Providers to cancel one or more subsequent semesters sessions—reflected in the noticeable drop in enrollment following the Spring 2020 semester. With the uncertainty around when and how in-person instruction would resume, some Providers transitioned to remote instruction (see *The Challenges of Remote Instruction* for more information). Total enrollment remained at or below 50 percent of pre-COVID-19 levels during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. However, in Fall 2021 there was again an increase in new CIP student enrollment after several semesters of relatively few new enrollees, indicating renewed interest in and capacity of CIP programs. About one-fourth of enrolled CIP students in the 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 academic years were new students, compared to only 7 percent in the 2020-2021 academic year.

FIGURE 16. TOTAL NUMBER OF CIP STUDENTS, BY SEMESTER (N=931)
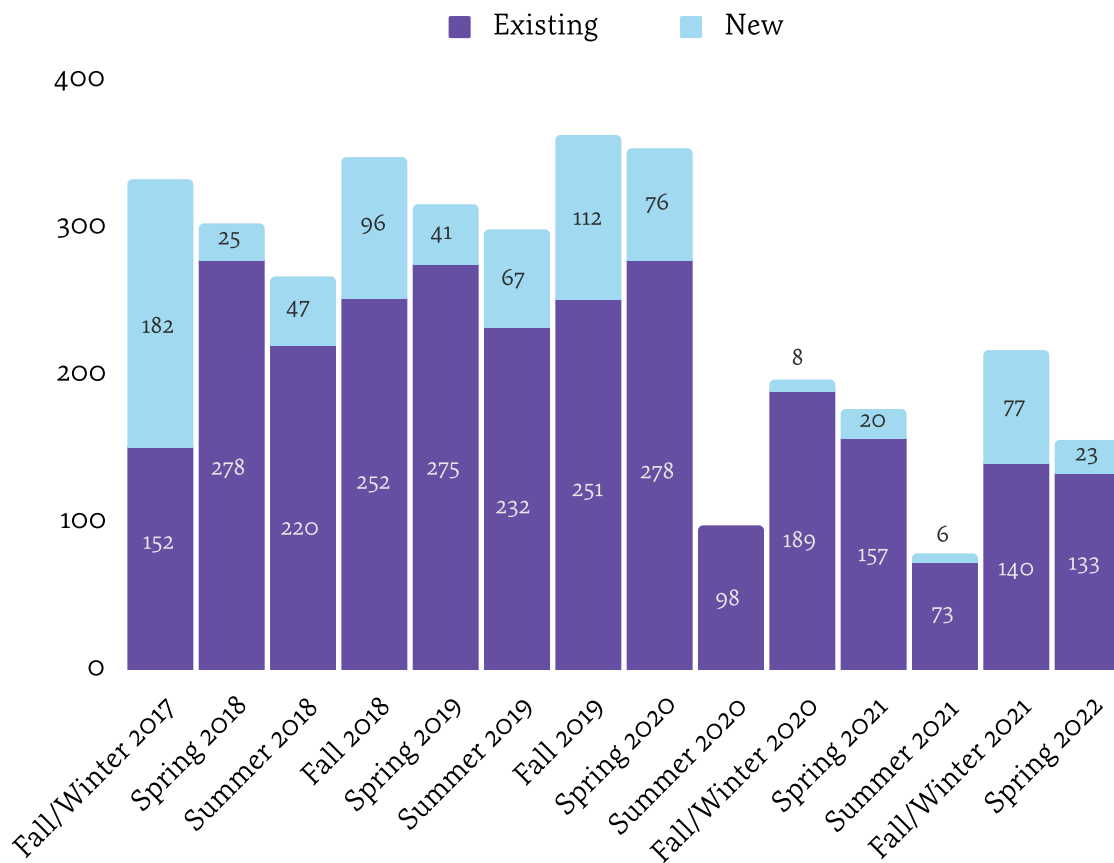
The COVID-19 pandemic aside, certain kinds of materials, courses, and approaches were simply not possible in a prison setting due to security considerations, facility structures, and the availability of resources. There are inherent differences, therefore, between a college-in-prison classroom and a college classroom in the community. The following sections will describe how professors adjusted their teaching methods to accommodate the needs of students while maintaining a high standard of instruction, limitations related to prison policies and setting, and the role of CIP in establishing program transfer and improving student transfer.

Meeting Students Where They Are

Students and faculty alike noted students' drive to perform well and overall high levels of engagement in their coursework. With regard to academic preparedness for college-level coursework, students described feeling prepared for the level of instruction in their courses; 79 percent of student survey takers agreed or strongly agreed that they were prepared for college, though the support for this sentiment was varied—only 26 percent strongly agreed while the other 53 percent simply agreed (see *Appendix 7* for more detail on self-reported education and employment data from the CIP Student Survey). One student focus group participant reported that she had not been in school for 7 years before enrolling in CIP during the COVID-19 pandemic, and quickly realized that she wasn't familiar with things like the MLA citation format or expectations of a college instructor, and had to lean on other students for help. Another student focus group participant described not being able to "express myself how I wanted to" before enrolling in CIP, and through CIP coursework, recognized that what he needed was "structure in writing" to be able to "express myself freely."

Several Providers noted that CIP students' overall preparedness for college, particularly with regard

to their writing, was lower when compared to traditional students, and described additional steps faculty took to meet students where they are in terms of academic readiness. One instructor connected the common need for additional support in writing to variation among students, including in age range, recency of prior instruction, and language. As previously mentioned, CIP students are more diverse than those in traditional college settings with respect to age and/or how recently they may have engaged in formal instruction. For example, some students may have completed high school several decades prior whereas others may have more recently earned their GED or HSE while in prison. Additionally, some CIP students were English Language Learners (ELLs) and therefore may have required additional support in order to meaningfully engage in an English-based curriculum.

> *Another student focus group participant described not being able to "express myself how I wanted to" before enrolling in CIP, and through CIP coursework, recognized that what he needed was "structure in writing" to be able to "express myself freely."*

An analysis of credits earned prior to CIP enrollment in associate of art (AA)/associate of sciences (AS) programs suggested that the need for additional support may also be regional (see *Figure 17*). The data demonstrate that students from NYC had slightly less experience with college-level coursework compared to upstate students.[103] Relatedly, students from NYC (66 percent) were more likely to have a GED/HSE as their highest level of education prior to CIP compared to those from Central and Western New York (47 percent);

FIGURE 17. HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL AT ENROLLMENT OF CIP STUDENTS, BY LAST PLACE OF RESIDENCE (N=896)

Legend:
- High school diploma only
- GED/High School Equivalency only
- Some college in prison
- Some college in community
- College degree

Region	High school diploma only	GED/HSE only	Some college in prison	Some college in community	College degree
NYC	11%	66%	14%	7%	1%
Long Island and Hudson Valley	15%	60%	17%	6%	1%
Central and Western New York	11%	47%	32%	7%	3%
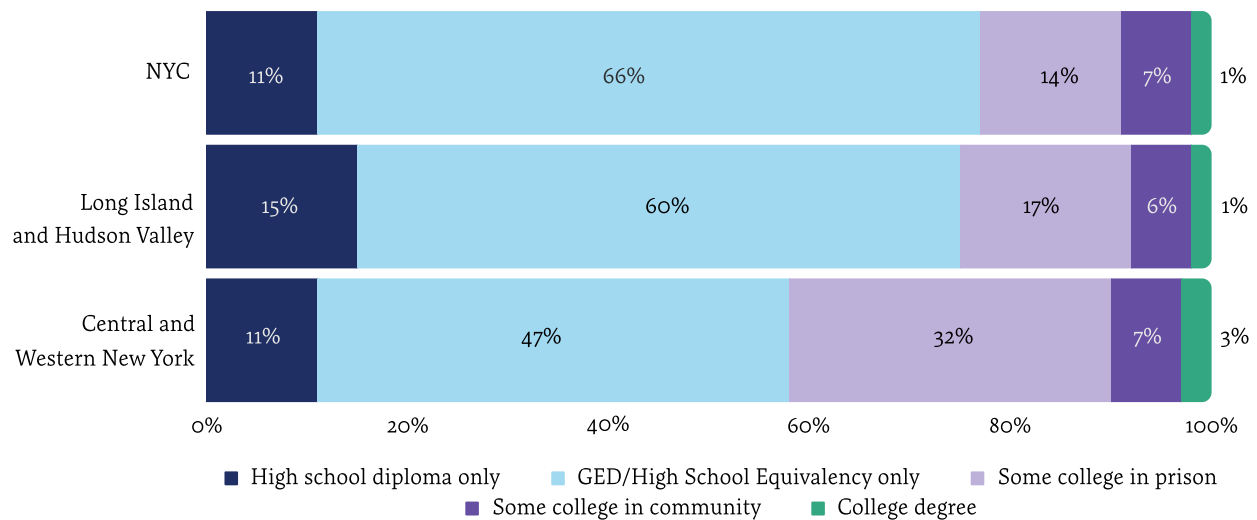
conversely, the latter were more likely to have had some college in prison experience prior to CIP (32 percent) compared to those students from NYC (15 percent). In part due to these differences in education levels at enrollment, more students from Central and Western New York (6 percent) and Long Island and the Hudson Valley (5 percent) completed their degrees while still incarcerated compared to students from NYC (1 percent). However, when looking at released former CIP students only, students from NYC had better outcomes; former students from NYC were more likely to complete the program at the time of release (7 percent), compared to students from surrounding NYC areas (2 percent), indicating a need to expand access to academic reentry services outside the NYC metropolitan area (see *Improving and Expanding Reentry* for more details).[104] The analysis found no statistically significant differences by race with regard to overall program completion.

Additionally, faculty noted variation in student experience with evidence-based writing, explaining that it "means I have to think about very different ways to make the instruction related to diverse needs." Scaffolding content to meet a variety of needs did not lower faculty's expectations, however, and one professor said that students "will rise to the level that you expect." Some professors shared that they dedicated relatively more time reviewing assignments and flagging corrections related to grammar, spelling, and other writing skills. One writing professor described asking students to "think of writing as code-switching," and found that to be an effective approach to get students engaged and interested in learning writing conventions and developing their writing skillset. Students in one focus group appreciated a grammar course they were taking as part of their first semester of college, saying "I can see an improvement in my writing and the work actually paying off."

Several professors and students also noted that students often helped each other, but they wished there was also writing tutoring available to students in the facility, as most facilities did not have these services given limited Provider capacity.

Additionally, restrictions on movement within prisons limited opportunities for students to receive supplemental support from other students or from faculty outside of regular class time in the ways that traditional students might (e.g., through study groups, tutoring at a campus writing center, or faculty office hours). One instructor noted that even more informal means of enrichment were foreclosed to incarcerated students, such as

> *"on campus, a student can ask an interesting question and then you have a twenty-minute conversation after class...I can't do that in [a prison]."*

Instead, multiple professors described providing more opportunities for one-on-one conversations during class time, sometimes breaking to talk with each student individually about an assignment and leaving other students to work independently. Instructors also adapted their instruction for the prison setting by using a seminar-style approach, weaving the lecture into the classroom discussion, to hear from all students during the class period. They found with a smaller class size in the facility, there were greater opportunities for individualized attention and checking for understanding on course content. Faculty's efforts were well-received: student survey takers overwhelmingly stated that they felt supported by their instructors, with 96 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that their instructors supported them in understanding and completing coursework.

The Challenges of Providing Instruction during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges for students across institutions of higher education as instructors and students contended with shifts from in-person to fully remote coursework. In contrast to how instructors and students communicate in the community, where professors can email or schedule in-person meetings with

students to discuss class topics, CIP instructors were prohibited from contacting students outside of class without submitting a written request to the DOCCS facility's superintendent, per DOCCS' Standards of Conduct for Volunteers.[105] These restrictions amplified instructional challenges when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and education programs moved to operate fully remotely.[106] Still, faculty reported feeling a strong commitment to their CIP students and feeling personally fulfilled by their experience teaching CIP classes. However, all interviewed faculty noted that their communication with students outside of class periods was precluded by prison protocols.

Communication Logistics

Due to the restrictions on communication outside of in-person course delivery, CIP programs were delayed in making the transition to a remote format during the first weeks and months when colleges in the community moved instruction online. CIP stakeholders noted that the pandemic moved the Initiative and its stakeholders into "crisis mode" and sparked discussion between Providers about how to navigate the challenges they faced as they worked to continue to implement programming. A staff person from the Education and Reentry Coordinator noted that improving communication between instructors and students became paramount, and it deprioritized other needs (discussed later in *Improving and Expanding Reentry*): "it felt inappropriate to continue conversations to build computer labs or library space when Providers did not have a way to talk with students." As a result, Providers put aside desires for knowledge-sharing about best practices because at the time they were more were focused on "the bare minimum" logistics to provide instruction.

Despite the many challenges that pandemic brought, Providers noted that, a "silver lining" of the pandemic was that it led to Providers gaining DOCCS approval to usher along increased

technological capacity for CIP programs at several facilities. Providers in some facilities drafted proposals to DOCCS to install Provider-funded computers and WebEx (a videoconferencing platform) technology so that instructors could hold courses remotely. Most Providers were eventually set up with access to JPay, a secure, heavily monitored messaging platform, which students and Providers paid to use with mixed success.[107] For example, Providers shared that DOCCS regulations about communication with students were ambiguous when JPay was first implemented to fill the service gap during the COVID-19 pandemic; questions remained as to whether the prohibition on communication between instructors and students outside of class still held—since classes could not be held, all communication was outside of class. One Provider shared that because of this lack of clarity, the institution was temporarily barred from accessing the software as they had unintentionally breached the policy. While multiple Providers and students described JPay as an exploitative and unnecessarily financially burdensome system, they felt that they had no alternative means of timely communication while barred from the facility during the pandemic, and use of the system was critical in continuing college provision during the pandemic.

At the start of the pandemic lockdown, Providers relied on DOCCS Education Supervisors[108] at their respective facilities to collect and distribute materials between students and instructors, which varied in success by facility: some Providers described the Education Supervisors as "indispensable" to the program and credited them with the success of their programs when operating remotely, while other Providers reported that their programs were not able to operate effectively during the pause of in-person programming. Students at one facility described the process as "smooth, even during the shutdown" in large part, due to the Education Supervisor who collected their homework "and sends it to the professor,

and then she returns it to us." The students and faculty at this facility agreed that the program would not have been able to operate remotely without the work of Education Supervisor. This level of involvement by the Education Supervisor during the pandemic, while greatly appreciated, would likely be prohibitively time-intensive to implement at scale across facilities.

The Challenges of Remote Instruction

Students and faculty alike noted that they made do with the circumstances to make college in prison during the COVID-19 pandemic as similar as possible to more traditional settings while at the same time complying with DOCCS policies aimed to maintain facility and student safety. Across facilities, DOCCS facility staff assisted with several tasks, including distributing class materials, collecting completed assignments to mail to faculty outside of facilities for review, and setting up televisions and screens in classrooms such that faculty could conduct their classes via WebEx. Despite these adjustments and workarounds, students and faculty also described remote courses as inferior to in-person instruction. As one professor described, "there are a lot of nonverbal cues that I can glean when I'm in the classroom with my students that I can't get over the phone," and that it is "all just much easier in an in-person environment." The professor posited that "from a student's perspective, there's [still] an exchange of ideas, but it's not as intense or as rapid as it is with in-person instruction." In particular, some faculty described providing more lecture-style classes rather than seminar-style classes given the logistical difficulties of remote instruction (i.e., being able to hear all students well and in an efficient manner), while others continued to use more seminar-style methods despite these difficulties, asking students questions throughout the class to keep students engaged.

Students agreed with this sentiment, with one explaining that with remote instruction: "If you didn't understand and had a question, [you] couldn't get a hold of the teacher." Students found correspondence courses frustrating because they were only interacting with the professor—"you have only your and their [the professor's] perspective"—and were not engaging with the perspectives of fellow students. Students and Providers both reflected that remote coursework limited the opportunities for students to receive additional assistance from faculty and interact meaningfully with their peers, practices that traditional students can rely on as they progress through their degree programs in the community. In one CIP facility where all but one of the courses were taught remotely as of Spring 2022, students said that they were not able to ask professors questions over WebEx: "They can't hear us and we can't hear them." One student in a focus group noted that they "took biology, but had to drop it" because the class was taught via correspondence and they found it difficult to keep up without in-person, real-time contact with the professor.

While the negative comments were plenty, students also noted a few positives to remote learning. Some students noted that correspondence coursework was easier (e.g., open-book tests), and students described having more flexibility and more time to complete assignments. One student said the coursework was "easier to manage because you can set your own schedules, but [with] in-person [instruction] we have less control over that." However, students described feeling uncertain about how they were graded in remote courses, with one student saying she "had gotten an A for all papers, then a B+ at the final grade, which was very confusing. It is more difficult when there's not a teacher to give you insight [into their grading decisions]." Additionally, some Providers noted that the extensive travel required to more distant facilities can discourage faculty from participating in

CIP, and remote instruction helped recruit instructors who may not have otherwise participated.

Benefits of In-Person Instruction

Overall, faculty and students expressed gratitude when courses resumed in-person, both because of the higher quality of instruction and because it provided more opportunities to have positive interactions with faculty. "You cannot replace this," one student described. Another student said that remote instruction, in contrast to in-person, may lead to "missing the whole concept if I don't interact with teachers." Students recalled professors pushing them to engage critically and said they are committed to ensuring that students understand course content. In addition, students described in-person class discussions as valuable, "very interactive," and as an opportunity for students to bring in their personal experience and "hear other perspectives." Students noted that professors help students think critically in these discussions: "if everyone agrees, the professor pushes us to think about it another way." In response to an open-ended question on student satisfaction, one student survey taker wrote:

> *"Being in the college program has improved my way of thinking. Most importantly, a group of like-minded people discussing topics of classes is fulfilling."*

Overall, faculty reiterated student sentiments that in-person instruction was more effective and fulfilling. Multiple faculty members noted that it was easier to facilitate these discussions, grasp student comprehension, and pivot the direction of the conversation in person rather than over video.

Despite these benefits, classes could not resume in-person at full capacity immediately due to lingering COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. When classes resumed in-person, as they did for all Providers (for at least some classes) by Spring 2022,

social distancing requirements often limited the number of students that could be in the classroom and the number of courses that could be offered. Students remarked that they were frustrated with these changes because they limited course options, degree progress, and opportunity to engage with their professors. For example, in a focus group in Fall 2021, students lamented that they had one class session per week instead of the typical two for the course because of social distancing requirements that reduced class size, allowing only half of the class in the room at one time. However, the logistical challenges of providing instruction in prison will not necessarily dissipate with time. Many of the frustrations that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted were exacerbations of the preexisting challenges of providing college-level instruction in a prison setting.

Practical Considerations of Providing Instruction in a Prison Setting

Providers noted some of the limitations of the prison environment (e.g., inadequate classroom space, issues with noise and temperature) as well as the challenges of teaching in a prison compared to a non-prison setting (e.g., security issues, collaborating with DOCCS). A few Providers described difficulties and extensive coordination with their respective DOCCS facilities to ensure college-in-prison programming would have an appropriate, dedicated space for instruction. Providers found that positive collaboration with DOCCS Education Supervisors was an important element for programs to run smoothly (the importance of the DOCCS Education Supervisor is described in The Challenges of Remote Instruction, above) Although these issues have the potential to affect the quality of instruction, faculty and other stakeholders voiced creative ways they sought to work around these constraints.

Creating an Environment Conducive to Learning

The environmental conditions and the physical space in DOCCS facilities created several challenges: many Providers explained that DOCCS facilities became overwhelmingly hot with temperatures surpassing 90 degrees during the summer months, which not only affected faculty's abilities to teach in these conditions but also students' abilities to get sufficient rest and focus on their work in and out of the classroom. Additionally, multiple student focus groups, Providers, and facility staff reported that the loud and disruptive prison environment made it difficult for students to work on assignments outside of class. One Provider stated that the "prison environment is not conducive to studying," noting that "it's really noisy [and] in medium facilities it is dorm style [so] there is a not a private space to work or read, [which] can be super frustrating for students." Additionally, students in a prison setting do not necessarily have ample time for studying, so in the time that they do have, the space must be as conducive to studying as possible. As one Provider elaborated, "there's a misconception that if [you're] incarcerated, you have all the time in the world. That's not true necessarily; most students [are] working a job within a facility, in essence working full time job and engaging in program," leaving little time for studying, and in an environment less than conducive to doing so as effectively as possible.

> "There's a misconception that if [you're] incarcerated, you have all the time in the world. That's not true necessarily; most students [are] working a job within a facility, in essence working full time job and engaging in program."

In response to these issues, multiple student focus groups, as well as a few DOCCS facility staff, proposed housing college students in the same units to ensure a quiet environment conducive to learning, as well as provide easier access to targeted resources (e.g., libraries, computer labs) and opportunities for study groups. In one focus group, a student described a situation where he had to work with a student who lived on the other side of the jail; to meet his study partner, the student had to wait for approval for movement within the facility and hoped that the other student would show up. Another student said a "If we all could live together, if college was housed together [for example] ... it would be easier than it is now. I could go up to [another student] and ask questions, not like now," and other students agreed, "it's a barrier, the housing [situation]." However, opinions on this matter varied across stakeholders;[109] while students and Providers noted the potential benefits of having students live in the same unit for ease of collaboration, multiple stakeholders noted the benefits of interactions between students in the facility and their non-student peers. Several students in focus groups described learning about the CIP program from other students that they interacted with in the facility who encouraged them to sign up. Additionally, students and Providers noted that participation in the CIP program may have positive influences on the incarcerated setting (e.g., a focus on studiousness, a disincentive to engage in behavior that might lead to disciplinary actions) and the benefits might extend beyond the students to non-student peers in their vicinity.

Coordination and Collaboration with Facility Staff

Furthermore, operating a college program in a correctional environment presented unique challenges with regard to adherence to DOCCS security protocols and interaction with Corrections officers (COs). In the first part of the Initiative (prior to the onset of COVID-19), half of the Providers reported

delays in processing faculty through security when entering DOCCS facilities, or described security lockdowns, all of which reduced allotted class times or resulted in classes being cancelled altogether, which can impact not only individual class sessions but plans for the remainder of the course that semester.

Additionally, Providers' successful coordination with DOCCS facility staff largely depended on individual facilities and the attitudes of facility staff toward college-in-prison programming. A majority of Providers noted that the COs with whom they interacted were "receptive" to the program; one ascribed the success of the program to the Provider's ability to "maintain good relationships" with COs and other DOCCS employees. A few faculty members also noted that COs were "kind and accommodating," with one professor explaining that "when you show up after a few times, it's the same people, same COs that let you in [and] walk you across, so it becomes a stress-free process even though it's a stressful environment," and that they "never made me feel like a burden."

However, all Providers encountered challenges to the administration of their programs and some students as well as some Providers described concerns about COs. One of these Providers expressed frustration with what they saw as the COs' disapproval of the provision of college instruction for incarcerated students, recalling "the amount of times I walked [students] from the front door to the classroom, and hearing from COs [pejorative comments about students]." The same Provider expressed concern that "sometimes [the students] were being targeted; they [the COs] wanted to get them out of the program," and one student focus group also described fearing retaliation from officers for participating in college. Several Providers stated that some COs were noticeably "hostile," "upset," or "resentful" about the perceived unfairness that incarcerated people have access to a free college education when they and their families do

not. A few student survey takers expressed similar sentiments: in an open-ended question that asked about overall satisfaction with the CIP program, among students who wrote a response to this question, 9 percent remarked upon negative or disruptive attitudes of, or experiences with, DOCCS staff. One student described this negativity as "there is a culture of harm that constitutes the motives of the officers who work the school area. It feels like an undermining force aimed at dissuading students to strive." Students that described encountering opposition to the college program noted that it was harmful to the educational experience, with one student stating,

"I wish the college could do more to protect the academic space we share and the autonomy that is needed for creativity. School requires autonomy that is not typical of prison settings."

Another student shared their opinion that "There must be pro-college administrative personnel in position in order for all of the college-specified needs to be met." Nonetheless, faculty stated that "people still learn quite well despite the difficulties."

Notably, these negative perceptions offered by these students reflect only a small number (9 percent) of respondents and an even smaller number of CIP students in total, given that students in only three of the seven facilities responded to this open-ended question, while students in the remaining four facilities did not offer a response. But, given that the question did not prompt students to voice opinions on specific stakeholders, it is nonetheless important that a portion of students voiced these experiences. The remainder of students who did respond to the open-ended question did not mention DOCCS staff or facilities, but rather used the open-ended question to reflect on other aspects of their program experience such as instructor-student relationships, course availability, and their overall gratitude for the program.

Other Providers noted that distrust or negative perceptions of COs among faculty may have colored their interactions based on misplaced assumptions. One Provider gave an example of a security-related delay that a faculty person took personally, noting that this circumstance "speaks to a lack of fit between faculty and DOCCS staff/culture at times." Furthermore, several Providers also sympathized with COs, with one reflecting "some of the COs may sometimes seem paranoid with their searches that seem to go on forever [but] I can see their perspective, there are incidents within the prison."

Faculty Recruitment and Retention

All Providers recruited instructors of comparable quality to their on-campus instructors, including a mix of tenured faculty and adjunct instructors. Nonetheless, approximately half of Providers said they had experienced difficulty in retaining instructors from semester to semester and in recruiting new faculty to instruct college courses in a correctional setting. Facilities in the Northern and Western regions of New York are often in more remote areas, making travel more difficult for faculty. These difficulties may have created more challenges for Providers to consistently offer a high volume and variety of courses. As one instructor explained, "People are not willing to do the extra driving and checking in [to the facility] that it requires" and the Provider was unable to cover the cost of travel to the facility. This Provider noted that once remote courses became an option during the COVID-19 pandemic, the option to teach remotely helped with recruiting faculty.

Providers described their specific strategies to recruit new instructors for their college programs, including through networking and word-of-mouth with current and former colleagues. Several faculty members across Providers noted that they became interested in the college program after learning of their colleagues' experiences teaching in a prison

environment, while others were recruited after attending a college-in-prison workshop or through Providers' professional networks.

In addition, most Providers described the logistics of movement in and out of the facilities as burdensome and unpredictable. In order to operate programs or provide services within a DOCCS facility, Provider administrators and faculty were required to register with the DOCCS Volunteer Services Program.[110] The majority of Providers described delays in processing faculty at facility gates as well as security lockdowns interrupting their scheduled classes throughout the course of the Initiative. Two Providers noted that registering as a volunteer took several months and resulted in delays in CIP programming; for example, one reported that because of the time required to approve a course instructor's volunteer application, they had to begin one semester approximately two months later than originally planned. Collectively, Providers said the long application process made it difficult to recruit and retain a group of instructors to keep CIP programs running effectively.

Classroom and Learning Resources

Amidst the limitations of the prison setting, CIP encouraged Providers to facilitate their programs in ways that mimicked community settings. Providers varied substantially in the experience and resources they had at their disposal, and the DOCCS facilities themselves varied with respect to security protocols and the conduciveness of the physical environment for learning. DOCCS facilities were not designed with college in prison in mind, and stakeholders frequently commented on how the prison environment constrained their instruction and access to resources available to college students in the community.

Computer Labs and Technology

Most students and faculty described limited access to computer labs for typing up assignments and doing research, and outdated or malfunctioning technology. Students and faculty noted a need for functioning computers and printers as well as resources for research, not only for students' current education but also to acclimate themselves to what is available and expected for college-level education outside of prison. Among student survey-takers, one-third (35 percent) did not feel that the technology they had access to meets their needs for their college program (see *Appendix 8* for self-reported data on the student experience from the CIP student survey). During CIP, four Providers installed new labs or updated labs in a total of five facilities, and had plans for a new lab in a sixth facility. Nonetheless, most Providers said they encountered challenges in providing access to technological and academic resources to students. NYS DOCCS Central Office and approximately half of Providers remarked that computer lab proposals[111] reequired substantial time—in some cases, years—for local facility and DOCCS Central Office staff to review. Such delays contributed to confusion and frustration among a few Providers, who felt they were left with an unclear path forward to establish computer access for their students, particularly early in the Initiative. For example, in response to DOCCS' prohibition of student Internet access, a few Providers proposed offering closed intranet systems and databases, which would allow students to access preloaded, vetted materials but not the Internet. Nonetheless, a few Providers reported that intranet systems had been denied by DOCCS without explanation, although these systems were operational in other non-CIP DOCCS facilities at the time.

Even in facilities with computer labs, Providers noted challenges with equipment and access to the lab. All five Providers who worked in facilities with computer labs reported that the computers

were outdated; and students from two focus groups noted that computers were limited in functionality (e.g., supporting only basic software like Microsoft Office) and that there were not enough for the number of students in the facility. One student explained, "The printer often jams, computers shut down, and some students have lost their work, all [of which] causes more stress." Additionally, students in another program could only use the computer lab during their designated study hall, which occurs once per week, and must be placed on a callout list, which permits them to move within the facility during a specific time slot. However, due to interruptions and miscommunications they may still have been unable to access the lab.

Another Provider shared that students' work was saved on disks in locked storage cabinets accessible only to a particular facility staff member, and they could not access their work when that staff person was not on duty. Furthermore, Providers that had computer labs described a need for computer training, saying "a lot of our students are much older and have little [computer] literacy…One student was incarcerated when beepers were new. That's the piece that feels daunting for them." Thus, the establishment of computer labs was only the first step in improving access to more modern technological resources. Accordingly, no faculty members reported requiring written assignments to be typed; instead, students submitted handwritten work. While most Providers expressed a desire for their CIP programs to more closely mirror their on-campus programs, students' limited or non-existent access to reliable computers and inability to conduct research on the Internet interfered with this goal.

Libraries, Resource Quality, and Course Material Approval Time

Providers and students reported limited access to quality library resources and course-assigned texts, which in turn inhibited students' ability to complete coursework in a comparable way to on-campus students. Providers are required to have all course materials reviewed and approved by their facility's Facility Media Review Committee prior to distributing them to students, but Providers reported waiting longer than the expected approval time throughout the Initiative. According to the DOCCS Standards of Conduct for Volunteers, the committee should review all materials within 10 days of receiving them. Nonetheless, many Providers reported wait times exceeding that, and technological issues that caused further delays, such as missing TV/DVD equipment even in instances where they had been approved.

Although all student focus groups reported having libraries in their facilities, students in most of these focus groups shared that the libraries were often closed and typically included a limited number of resources, limiting students' ability to conduct adequate research. One student said,

> "I need eight sources for a paper, but there are only eight books in the library. Everyone ends up writing the same paper because we all rely on the same materials."

Course texts available to students in the prison facility libraries also tended to be outdated, and a few faculty members noted that these outdated reference materials interfered with productive class discussions.

Despite the challenges, DOCCS, Providers, and students all responded to these issues of access with ingenuity. To improve access to quality, up-to-date educational materials in appropriate

quantity for incarcerated persons more broadly, DOCCS designed protocols to allow facilities to establish interlibrary loan (ILL) agreements with local libraries. According to one Provider, however, requested texts could still take excessive time to arrive, beyond the expected wait times, necessitating advanced planning in order for the texts to be used in students' coursework. To address similar challenges, another Provider established a partnership with their on-campus library, which renovated the facility's library furniture and donated three hundred new books. According to this Provider, the CIP program "having the same equipment [specifically, a renovated library and computer lab] as the [on-campus library] makes a big difference" to the student experience. One instructor helped incarcerated students access supplemental resources for independent projects by offering on-campus students in similar courses the opportunity to earn extra credit by printing articles most relevant to CIP students' research topics that the instructor then shared with their CIP students.

[A] Provider established a partnership with their on-campus library, which renovated the facility's library furniture and donated three hundred new books. According to this Provider, the CIP program "having the same equipment [specifically, a renovated library and computer lab] as the [on-campus library] makes a big difference."

Students also reported devising their own methods to access necessary resources. Several student focus groups and faculty recounted a common workaround: students would describe the research they needed to a family member or friend on the outside, who would use the Internet to research it, print out the information, and mail it to the student. However, students reported that sometimes the material did not arrive in time for the student to complete the assignment. Further, not all students could rely on this strategy as it depends on having close relationships with people on the outside. To address issues with resource access, one focus group suggested making up-to-date resources available to students via JPay's Lantern system (i.e., the educational arm of the secure messaging platform) so that they could be accessed more readily by students in college-in-prison programing.[112]

Although some students benefited from these makeshift solutions, these alternative methods presented cumbersome additional steps for students who wished to access richer scholarly materials and may have created inequities in access to educational resources among college-in-prison students. At a broader level, these limitations and workarounds highlight the barriers that must be anticipated by providers, corrections, and individual facilities in attempting to provide coursework and materials comparable to that experienced by students in traditional settings.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY OF EARNING A COLLEGE EDUCATION WHILE INCARCERATED

Overwhelmingly, students described their college-in-prison experience as life-changing and credited the program with fundamentally shifting the way that they think, their hopes for their future, and their overall approach to life. Students described transformations in several key areas:

- Introspection and self-perception;
- Purpose and motivation while in prison;
- Preparation for successful reentry;
- Family relationships; and
- Greater potential for financial stability

One student said that she hadn't "ever really thought critically about anything before, until that [English] course; [it] helped me understand what I have done and why I am here." However, this profound personal development is not without bittersweet self-reflection, with another student reflecting:

"I always assumed I would end up in prison. In some ways, CIP has been hard because it made me realize it wasn't my destiny and I could have avoided it."

Furthermore, nearly all (91 percent) surveyed students reported that participating in college in prison had given them a sense of pride in themselves (see *Appendix 8* for self-reported data on the student experience from the CIP student survey).

The vast majority of students in focus groups described college as a respite, "a break from what's going on in prison—takes us away from prison mentally." Students spoke to the ways in which participation in the college program helped to reduce interpersonal disputes in the prison facility, with students in one focus group saying that they can "avoid [gang] wars" because students are "more focused on finals." When programs were stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students expressed gratitude for the many ways Providers still stayed in touch, including sending newsletters, engaging students

FIGURE 18. PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF COLLEGE IN PRISON AS REPORTED IN THE STUDENT SURVEY (N=114)
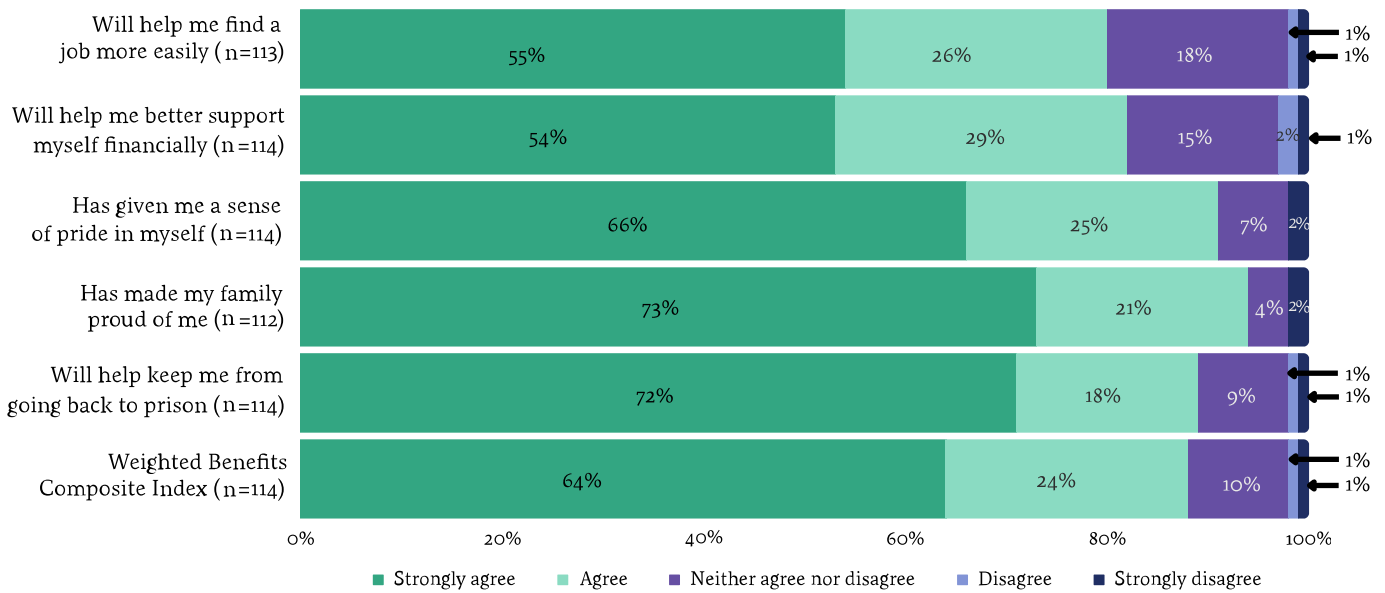
with summer enrichment programs, and providing text resources and writing prompts. While these activities were not for any college credit, they helped students stay engaged with the program and continue to experience the benefits of participating in college instruction.

Students were also aware of the potential benefits pursuing college in prison could have on their reentry experience (see *Figure 18*). Students shared that "the program gives you a running start instead of walking" with regard to reenrollment in educational programs, securing employment, and addressing other reentry needs (see *Improving and Expanding Reentry*). Almost all students reported that their participation in college in prison would help them avoid returning to prison (90 percent of survey takers agreed or strongly agreed), and one Provider noted that students in their program were motivated by the knowledge that incarcerated people who engage in college in prison have a better chance of success upon reentry than those who do not.

Among the potential benefits of college in prison that the survey questions posed (see *Appendix 8* for a full list), survey takers felt most strongly that attending college has made their families proud (93 percent agreed or strongly agreed). Relatedly, one Provider noted that students are often motivated by their own children's educational experiences:

> *"They'll do homework together. It creates another positive exchange with their children. That's an effective life change for them. It's not so much the associate degree, it's the broadening of perspectives and communicating with family members."*

Students in focus groups similarly expressed that family was a motivating factor:

> *"I wanted to make a change. I have kids at home I want to show to them that their father can make it… I share my grades with my kids and they share me they share their grades with me…[to see] whoever does better."*

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In addition to a shift in perspectives, improved quality of life, and positive impacts on familial relationships, students and faculty described the anticipated benefits of material gains from participating in college in prison. While several students in focus groups and student survey takers described a frustration that the liberal arts degree and CIP course curriculum would not prepare them for their desired profession (e.g., in healthcare or business), they still felt that college courses were good experience, would provide potentially transferrable credits towards the majors they ultimately wanted to pursue, and would help them achieve financial stability during their reentry journey. Specifically, a large majority of student survey takers agreed or strongly agreed that college will help them to support themselves financially (83 percent) or find a job more easily (81 percent) after release. Students' descriptions of how CIP changed their lives for the better offer some of the most persuasive evidence that CIP Providers are providing a meaningful service in their efforts to deliver high-quality college education to students incarcerated in NYS DOCCS facilities.

Overall, students overwhelmingly characterized the education they received through the CIP program as a "life changing process" and described how their minds and goals were forever changed due to the college experience, and were appreciative that they were treated with respect by the professors.

When surveyed about their overall reflections on their experience in the College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative, most respondents (83 percent) reported being extremely satisfied or very satisfied with their program. Overwhelmingly, with respect to their instructional and learning experience (see *Figure 19*), most survey takers reported that their instructor(s) had supported them in understanding and completing coursework (96 percent agreed or strongly agreed) and that attending class with their peers had been helpful in their learning (86 percent agreed or strongly agreed). Additionally, students reflected on limitations of the program, as only 40 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that

FIGURE 19. REFLECTIONS ON EXPERIENCE IN THE COLLEGE-IN-PRISON PROGRAM AS REPORTED IN THE STUDENT SURVEY (N=114)
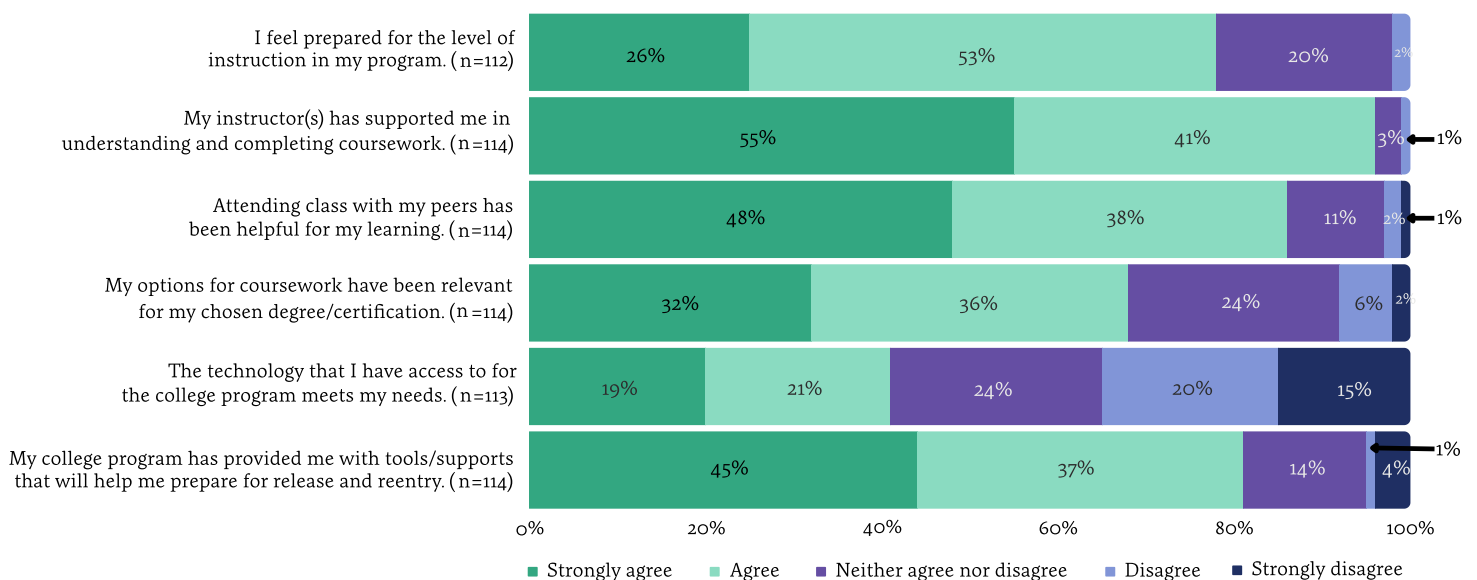
they had access to technology that met their needs for the program. Survey takers elaborated on program satisfaction/dissatisfaction in an open-ended question. In particular, students described the need for increased resources (e.g., library access, technology) and wished that the program provided more courses, or more specialized courses, in areas of student interest for future employment. Several students also described frustrations with the DOCCS employees who expressed discontent with the fact that college was available to the students. Nonetheless, despite the limitations, student respondents described feeling grateful for the opportunity to learn and described it as transformative.

Ensuring Program Standards and Improving Student Transfers between Programs

Providers routinely noted their efforts to provide high-quality, rigorous college courses, as described above. However, prior to CIP, college-in-prison programs operated somewhat independently and without shared standards related to course content and degree requirements, such that students could not efficiently transfer credits between programs when they moved between facilities or to external postsecondary institutions upon release. This presented significant barriers to degree completion for incarcerated students with respect to transfer and degree completion. As part of CIP, SUNY worked to align curricula for equivalent degree programs, establish program standards, and develop transfer and articulation agreements to improve students' ability to transfer credits into other programs in the event they are transferred to other NYS DOCCS facilities or are released prior to completing their degrees.

Program Standards and Transfer/Articulation Agreements

Under CIP, SUNY was responsible for establishing and documenting the minimum program standards for CIP programs, which may be instructive for

statewide standards particularly given the expected increase in providers and programs in light of TAP and Pell reinstatement.[113] To develop these standards, SUNY collected program information from the seven Providers (i.e., degree requirements, syllabi, and instructor curriculum vitae) as well as public information related to hiring and retention of qualified educators to teach within correctional facilities. As detailed further in this section, SUNY then mapped and aligned requirements across these Providers with NYS public universities as well as those of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), which has jurisdiction in New York.

In addition to its work on transfer and articulation, SUNY also participated in the New York Consortium for Higher Education in Prison (NY-CHEP) meetings, as well as a number of conferences, convenings, and other communications regarding higher education in prison.[114] SUNY gathered new resources for ensuring quality higher education in prison. For instance, JSTOR developed a platform for use in correctional facilities that does not require the Internet; and the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) launched a research initiative to develop a Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) framework that will help college-in-prison practitioners assess the impact of their programs and processes. SUNY made these resources available through the Institute for Justice and Opportunity's online resource platform launched after the first Learning Exchange. These efforts to establish common curriculum standards have helped to ease transfer of credit between CIP Providers.

Student Transfer Between Facilities

Unfortunately, transfers from one facility to another often interrupted degree progress: the facilities to which students were transferred did not always have college programs, and even when they did, the programs may not have had available space, or offer needed courses, for the student at the time of

the transfer. Even in cases when students transferred to other facilities with college-in-prison programs, they may nonetheless have experienced challenges with completing their coursework, and the change could have been especially jarring if the transfer happened mid-semester. In addition, programs can be operated by different Providers and as such, students may have had to go through the new Provider's application process and transfer credits into the program before being permitted to resume coursework.

When an incarcerated individual enrolled in college in prison, DOCCS (specifically, the Director of Education in coordination with the Office of Classification and Movement) places the student on an educational hold, which is designed to ensure that the student is not transferred to another facility while engaged in coursework. As a temporary approach to addressing the challenges created when students transfer facilities prior to completing their degrees, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity advised Providers to request two-semester "transfer holds" from DOCCS for all students enrolled in their programs. While Providers described educational holds as effective, they noted that the holds do not apply to students new to participating in the CIP program and enrolled in pre-college non-credit bearing courses. Furthermore, DOCCS policy states that these holds may occasionally be superseded for other reasons related to facility security, student behavior, and preparation for release, and students may be transferred to another facility at their request (e.g., to be closer to home or to be closer to a minor child). A few Providers and a DOCCS stakeholder noted that students may be transferred from a maximum to a medium security facility before release, and this security-related reason often supersedes educational holds at maximum security facilities. Furthermore, information regarding a student's movement within and from facilities (e.g., an upcoming facility transfer) is considered confidential and is not provided to the public in real-time,

including to Providers and even some facility staff. During CIP, a total of 115 CIP students left programs due to transfers to other facilities, for reasons including the range of those described below (see *Figure 20*).

FIGURE 20. REASON FOR CIP PROGRAM EXIT (N=648)
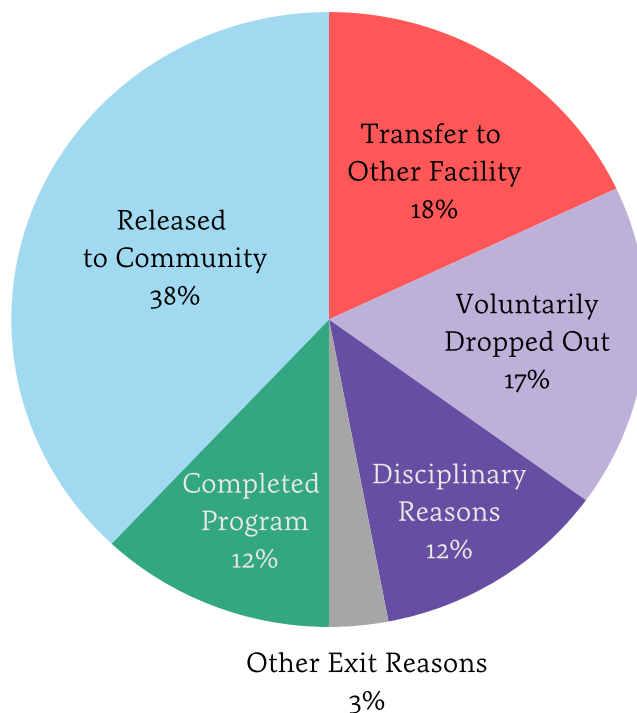
Note: This figure does not include the remaining 283 students who remained enrolled as of the end of the Spring 2022 semester.due to facility transfer.

Faculty described frustration about being surprised to learn a student had been transferred, which, combined with difficulties that Providers faced communicating directly with students, often left students unable to complete the semester and jeopardized their degree completion. Providers and DOCCS staff emphasized the importance of communication and coordination around transfers to inform Providers about transfers and ensure that students were able to continue with their education with as little

interruption as possible. To ensure that DOCCS staff knew which students should receive education holds, one Provider regularly shared a list of enrolled students with the DOCCS facility staff and credited these efforts with maintaining consistent student enrollment and seamless transfers of students to college-in-prison programs at other facilities.

Developing Transfer Agreements

Prior to CIP, SUNY and CUNY had established transfer paths and agreements between the two university systems. During the Initiative, SUNY coordinated with CUNY to extend these articulation and transfer agreements to general education credits earned in CIP programs, which in turn supported more seamless transfer of credits between SUNY and CUNY institutions following release.[115] First, SUNY collected program information from the seven Providers (i.e., course descriptions, materials, and syllabi) to map the degrees and courses offered by all seven Providers. SUNY also mapped the general education requirements of all seven Providers to the general education components of the public universities in NYS (i.e., the City University of New York and the State University of New York) vis-à-vis the CUNY "Pathways" and SUNY "Transfer Paths." In particular, SUNY placed a focus on the private Providers given that SUNY campuses were already compliant with SUNY general education requirements.[116]

SUNY then asked each Provider to map their requirements against the 10 general education categories determined by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (see *Appendix 9* for an example of the general education curriculum map). Using these responses, SUNY developed a Prison Education General Education Framework, a matrix of each Provider's core requirements based on the MSCHE standards. SUNY determined that most general education

requirements across CIP Providers were comparable, identified where they aligned, and created a set of guidelines so that anyone who earned those credits in those categories could transfer them between participating institutions.

Based on this preparatory work, SUNY created articulation and transfer agreements, and five out of the seven Providers signed on. One Provider described,

> *"SUNY worked with Providers to understand the importance of these agreements and the impact they would have on student educational experience and degree completion."*

Two Providers declined to sign the agreement, citing concerns about "a single system of college in prison rather than those that already run independent colleges in New York" and that there was "no reason to create a system different than what exists at the college on campus" and "nothing that is unique to prison has been better for anyone." Conversely, one of the participating Providers noted that articulation agreements had been "for the student, very beneficial [because] I can get the student moved to a facility that has an articulation agreement between [the] Providers." The same Provider noted that DOCCS staff "are very good about alerting me when someone in college will be moved and will ask where they should be moved."

Transferring Previously Earned Credits

Students reported encountering difficulties transferring their credits into their college-in-prison programs and expressed concern about the transferability of their credits to other CIP Providers and outside institutions. The process for transferring in prior credits varied by institution, which in turn affected students' ability to complete their degrees in a timely

manner either pre- or post-release. These issues were not faced by Providers in more established programs, as they reported that the process of transferring in prior credits from other institutions went smoothly. One Provider described the process as "pretty straightforward" adding that the DOCCS Education Supervisor at their facility did not charge students or the Provider for the cost of obtaining prior transcripts.

Most Providers operating less established programs, however, reported difficulty awarding transfer credit for students' prior coursework with other college-in-prison programs or colleges in the community due to bureaucratic and capacity-related processing issues. Specifically, Providers described a struggle to obtain students' transcripts even from prior college-in-prison Providers in a timely manner, an administrative process that required DOCCS facility staff approval. This process is much simpler in traditional college settings; as one Provider described, "if it were done in any other environment, we would simply make the request from the institution [registrar]." Incarcerated students are reliant on Providers to execute the transfer credit process, as they do not have access to their web-based accounts due to DOCCS' policy restricting Internet access in DOCCS facilities (see *Classroom and Learning Resources* for more information on how technology impacts CIP). Students reported that because their transcript transfers were delayed, they occasionally had to retake classes they had already passed.

These Providers described various strategies to obtain transcripts including supporting students completing transcript request forms for their previous institutions and submitting written correspondence to students' former schools to explain the unique challenges in facilitating these transfers. Notably, Providers faced difficulties completing transcript requests on behalf of students given the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) violations in disclosing student education information to third parties. In addition, transcript requests from prior institutions typically required a fee, which students were often not able to afford on their own. A few Providers also shared that lack of staff capacity at their institutions prevented the review of course equivalencies and potential acceptance of transfer credits. Collectively, these challenges can prevent students from progressing through their degree programs in a timely manner and, in cases when students are required to retake coursework, can dissuade students from continuing on in their degree programs as well as limit the number of students Providers can serve over time.

In sum, Providers faced challenges with facilitating transfer of credits and adhering to prison policies and protocols, and encountered unforeseen issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, their ability to serve their students well, as students described in their own words above, despite these obstacles, speaks to Providers' fortitude, creativity, and collaboration with other Providers, SUNY, and DOCCS in order to achieve the common goal of providing a high-quality college-in-prison experience that was both personally fulfilling to students and effective in helping them to meet their goals in reentry.

IMPROVING AND EXPANDING REENTRY

Students often face barriers to employment, housing, and meeting basic needs when returning home after incarceration. Additionally, students have typically not been provided with individualized academic reentry plans to assist them as they readjust to life outside of prison and strive to reenroll in college. The Initiative aimed to improve student reentry outcomes through more explicit reentry planning and preparation—namely, linking students with employment opportunities, reenrollment support, and other post-release resources.

Reentry was expected to take greater focus in the latter half of the Initiative given that many participating students would begin transitioning out of facilities and back into communities. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, necessitated readjusting the Initiative's priorities and resources. During this time, Providers focused energies on navigating the obstacles of providing a meaningful educational experience in

spite of the challenges the pandemic presented (see previous section on *Ensuring Instructional Quality*). Nonetheless, the Initiative raised a number of insights about the contours and challenges of providing successful reentry support that can be instructive for the field at-large.

This section begins with a discussion of what reentry supports are available to students across New York. Although preparing individuals for release is core to NYS DOCCS' mission, the reentry support landscape across the state has historically been fragmented and more focused in the state's downstate regions (see *State Reentry Resource Landscape*). Given the potential benefit of education to the reentry process, Providers are well positioned to play a meaningful role in supporting students' readjustment to life in the community. Prior to CIP, most Providers had neither implemented nor formalized academic reentry plans. The section then describes the Initiative's efforts to build capacity of Providers, with the support of the Institute for Justice and

Opportunity, to create individualized academic reentry plans to better facilitate students' reenrollment and continuing education, access to necessary social services, and/or finding employment opportunities aligned with their course of study (see *The Need to Expand Reentry Infrastructure*). Finally, the section highlights various reentry challenges that students can face upon reentry (see *Basic Reentry Needs and Foundational Supports*) and contextualizes academic reenrollment trends for those who were released prior to completing their degrees (see *Post-Release Reenrollment*).

State Reentry Resource Landscape

As noted above, one barrier to reentry reported by students, Providers, and other stakeholders was that reentry resources are not distributed evenly across New York. Students and nearly all stakeholders remarked that reentry resources were concentrated in "downstate" New York (i.e., the NYC metropolitan area, the Hudson Valley region, and Long Island), leaving "upstate" New York (i.e., Central New York and Western New York) with a dearth of no-cost and low-cost resources.

Students' last place of residence provides one indication for where they may return upon release (see *Figure 21*). Most students (63 percent) had a last place of residence in downstate counties. In focus groups and survey responses, several of these students anticipated issues with financial and housing stability due to the high cost of living. Students expressed the concern that interruptions to their stability could result in reoffending, with one student saying:

> "We all have fears when we get home [about being able to support ourselves]. Nobody is trying to live with their mom. The tristate area is so expensive. All I know is the streets...On the streets, you could get money like that. But I want to stay focused."

FIGURE 21. LAST PLACE OF RESIDENCE AMONG CIP STUDENTS (N=931)
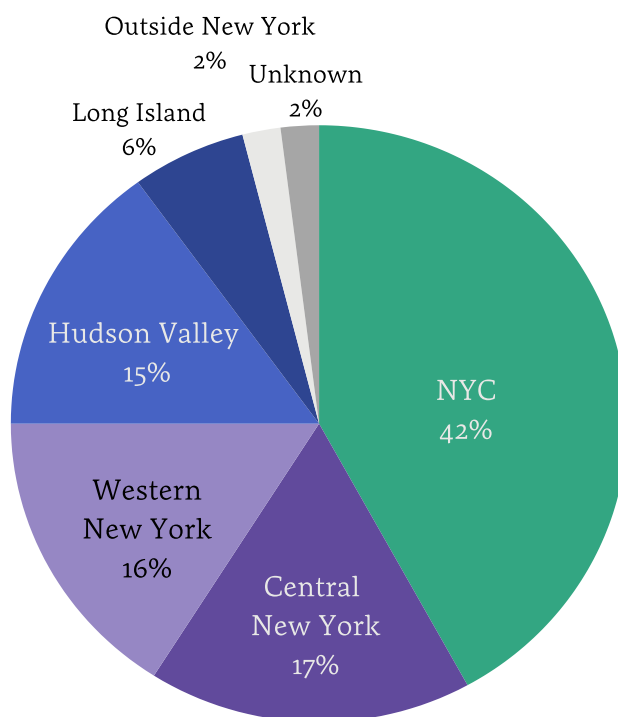
On the other hand, 33 percent of students could be expected to return to upstate counties in New York. Students who planned to return to upstate counties expressed concerns about access to comparable reentry services that they were aware existed in downstate counties. As one DOCCS stakeholder put it, "Generally, the reentry providers in the north don't have as many resources available as in New York City. If you're going back to Plattsburgh, those resources aren't there. I've had conversations with people in the north—they don't even know where to begin." Additionally, one Provider noted that their program simply had "less exposure" to reentry resources, because the resources were geographically distant from the Provider's campus; as such, the Provider relied on a faculty member who happened to have connections in the region to provide reentry support.

On the whole, the consensus was that it was much more difficult to connect CIP students to reentry resources if they were returning to a county upstate or to a different state entirely. To help Providers address these needs in New York, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity created a statewide resource directory that provides information about local organizations in counties across the state that provide educational reentry services, spotlights resources in upstate counties, and details resources downstate where organizations are more well-known.[117]

The Need to Expand the Reentry Infrastructure

The Initiative's efforts to strengthen the existing reentry infrastructure across New York was complicated by the fact that DOCCS already provided reentry support and Providers and CIP faced the risk of duplicating, rather than supplementing, existing resources. According to DOCCS policy, correctional staff provide reentry planning and resources to all incarcerated individuals in advance of their release. However, multiple Providers and student focus groups indicated that what they receive from DOCCS in the way of reentry preparation does not meet their needs. Additionally, students in another focus group offered that DOCCS Transitional Services focus on housing and employment needs and "are not equipped to help with college." Given that DOCCS is focused on general needs for reentering society, and not academic education, these comments highlight the potential role of Providers to assist with academic reentry plans specifically. Accordingly, to avoid duplicating existing resources, CIP focused specifically on academic reentry plans.

Provider-Led Resources for Reentry and Re-Enrollment

All seven Providers offered reentry supports to students including academic advising and assistance enrollment in campus programming. However, as expected, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity, Providers, and students reported a lack of uniformity in reentry planning supports among Providers—some Providers had dedicated reentry coordinators, provided one-on-one academic reentry advising, and facilitated workshops on housing and other needs related to reentry, while others lacked the capacity to provide meaningful assistance to prepare students for their return home. Thus, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity provided support primarily to the Providers with limited capacity for activities beyond classroom instruction, but reported difficulty doing so without additional funding to offer to them.

Despite all Providers offering reentry supports, not all students were released with an academic reentry plan tailored to their needs. Among released students who had not completed their degrees (247 students as of Spring 2022), only 52 percent had academic reentry plans at the time of release (see *Figure 22*). The provision of academic reentry plans can be difficult due to the timing of release to the community and transfers to other facilities. At times, transfers and release made it difficult for Providers to identify and help students who were nearing release (see *Student Transfer Between Facilities* in previous section for an explanation of transfer holds). Difficulties with coordinating this process were especially apparent at medium security facilities, which housed about two-thirds of CIP students. Medium security facilities are often students' "last stop" prior to release. Six Providers operated programs at medium-security DOCCS facilities and reported that students were often released directly into the community without any prior notification to their faculty or staff, which made it difficult to fully prepare their students for reentry, such as by mapping out pathways to degree completion post-release. Students housed in medium security facilities at the time of their release were more likely than those in maximum facilities to have left prison without their degrees

and without academic reentry plans: 35 percent of students in medium security facilities versus 4 percent of students in maximum security facilities left prison without degrees and academic reentry plans in place, respectively.

FIGURE 22. PROVISION OF ACADEMIC REENTRY PLANS AMONG RELEASED NON-COMPLETERS (N=247)
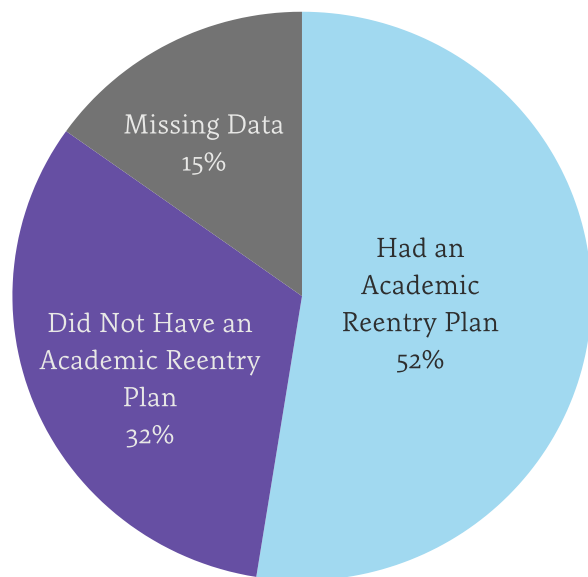
Additionally, unexpected releases to the community interfered with students' ability to complete their coursework and earn credits toward their degrees, as well as Providers' ability to make decisions regarding class enrollment. Providers, especially those serving students in medium security facilities, would therefore benefit from more intentional integration into, and more resources for, reentry coordination. This need was echoed by Providers at the Learning Exchange held virtually in September 2022, as they indicated the need for transitional reentry planners on the outside to help students execute their reentry plans and to assist students whose circumstances differed from their expectations and plans.

Providers' administrative data indicate that provision of academic reentry plans may aid reenrollment in the community, as hoped; among released non-completers, students who received an academic reentry plan were more likely than those without them to reenroll following release (38 percent compared to 6 percent, respectively, see *Figures 23, 24,* and *25* and *Post-Release Reenrollment* for additional data on reenrollment).[118, 119] Additionally, of the eight students who completed their degrees within the first year after release, seven had a reentry plan.[120]

> *Among released non-completers, students who received an academic reentry plan were more likely than those without them to reenroll following release (38 percent compared to 6 percent, respectively).*

Despite a clear need for, and benefits of, dedicated reentry support, Providers were largely unable to invest resources in developing a robust reentry infrastructure while working on building back the college program amidst disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff from the Institute for Justice and Opportunity stated "when COVID hit… Provider priorities were getting the program running and we saw academic reentry go to the wayside given that there is no academic reentry if there is no college in prison programming." Providers expressed similar sentiments, with one saying, during the COVID-19 pandemic, that "it's hard to focus on…additional services outside the program itself." Furthermore, during the pandemic, established reentry preparation practices, such as in-person meetings and workshops, became more difficult, if not impossible, to implement. For example, one Provider described the pandemic putting current practices to acclimate released former CIP students to college in the community on hold:

"We bring them to campus, we want them to realize they are welcome here, they are a student. We take them to the library. We have an orientation. We sit with them and go through the module with them. We have established contacts in the financial aid and registrar's office that understand this is a special population."

The Provider concluded by saying "This was all fairly successful, but I can't tell you where it is at with the pandemic." Overwhelmingly, students who took the student survey administered in Spring and Summer 2022 felt that Providers gave them the tools and supports they needed to prepare for release and reentry, with 82 percent of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement "My college program has provided me with tools/supports that will help me prepare for release and reentry" (see *Appendix 8*). Furthermore, students noted in surveys and focus groups that they felt supported by their college programs, and were confident that Providers were "ready, willing, and able to encourage our continued education," specifically by helping them acquire housing and employment post-release in addition to helping them to reenroll. Nonetheless, the findings around needs and recommendations for supports to aid reentry and reenrollment can inform college-in-prison providers moving forward.

Communicating with Students Post-Release

Providers expressed confusion about NYS DOCCS policies regarding post-release communication with students as well as related practical concerns around maintaining this communication. DOCCS Standards of Conduct state that individuals who wish to work with students upon release may only do so as part of a structured program aimed to assist with the reintegration process, and with written notice to the Supervisor of Correctional Facility Volunteer Services (SCFVC)

and the Superintendents of the facilities from which students are exiting. Notably, these policies are only applicable for students released who are still under community supervision.[121] Although CIP programs fit within these parameters, Providers reported receiving conflicting information about whether, in an effort to provide comparable educational experiences to students in the community, instructors or program administrators were allowed to maintain contact with CIP students after their release from prison. By contrast, in more traditional college settings, relationships between professors and students are not confined to the classroom, and students and professors can contact each other via email or meet in-person on campus (i.e., in office hours) such that professors can provide guidance and mentorship on students' educational trajectories and professional aspirations or to provide students with letters of recommendation.

Providers also described practical difficulties related to maintaining contact with students after their pending release, with one noting: "Many students don't know what their phone number or email will be, so we wait to hear from them." As one Provider described, "Everyone has our contact information before they go home. We also just tell people to Google us." Thus, similar to communication barriers while students are incarcerated (see *The Challenges of Remote Instruction*), barriers to communication between CIP instructors and students after any given course ends are greater than for traditional college students, who can more easily reach out to former instructors as a resource.

Nonetheless, a few Providers reported maintaining regular contact with formerly incarcerated alumni who had been released into the community, allowing Providers to continue helping them with reentry, reenrollment, and employment issues. These strategies of reminding students how to contact the Provider and maintaining regular post-release contact with students helped

Providers ensure that those students continued to receive support in the community and were equipped for positive reentry experiences. However, because services are often only provided for those former students that initiate contact with a Provider, there are many more formerly incarcerated students who do not receive any such services. There remains a gap, therefore, in Provider-led reentry support for those students who do not otherwise reach out. Relatedly, Providers reported a lack of information on students in general post-release, as a majority of released former students had missing data on whether they had re-enrolled (see *Figures 24, 25, and 26* in *Post-Release Reenrollment*).

Strategies for Providing Reentry Support

Providers described a range of strategies they use to prepare students for reentry,[122] both prior to and following release, including advising, workshops, written materials, and alumni networks. Some Providers had established reentry support practices prior to involvement in CIP and, as a result, were prepared to engage students in reentry planning as soon as they enroll, while newer Providers developed reentry support practices during CIP. Providers developed academic reentry support practices with materials and guidance from the Institute for Justice and Opportunity and/or learned from other CIP Providers' practices through the Learning Exchanges, involvement in NY-CHEP, or ad hoc networking. Providers reported working with their local DOCCS facility Education Coordinator and, as needed, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity to develop individualized academic reentry plans for students who were nearing release, either directly and/or through external service providers.[123]

Still, Providers' abilities to dedicate time and resources to this important part of the CIP students' experience depended primarily on institutional capacity. One Provider reflected on this

difference as follows: "With [better resourced Providers], those folks are adapting to provide academic reentry whereas [for] the more strapped programs…there is only one person, they don't have the capacity to do both." To that end, multiple Providers who had less capacity described a need for funding for a reentry-focused staff person able to dedicate time and resources to support students before, during, and after release from prison. A few Providers also noted that they were able to provide limited direct financial support, such as food, gift cards, and transportation passes for students approaching release.

FIGURE 23. RE-ENROLLMENT AMONG RELEASED NON-COMPLETERS, BY ACADEMIC REENTRY PLAN PROVISION (N=131)

Had an Academic Reentry Plan (n=80):
- Did Not Reenroll, but Released Less than 12 Months Ago 30%
- Did Not Enroll Post-Release 33%
- Enrolled in Program Post-Release 38%

Did Not Have an Academic Reentry Plan (n=51):
- Did Not Reenroll, but Released Less than 12 Months Ago 30%
- Did Not Enroll Post-Release 57%
- Enrolled in Program Post-Release 6%
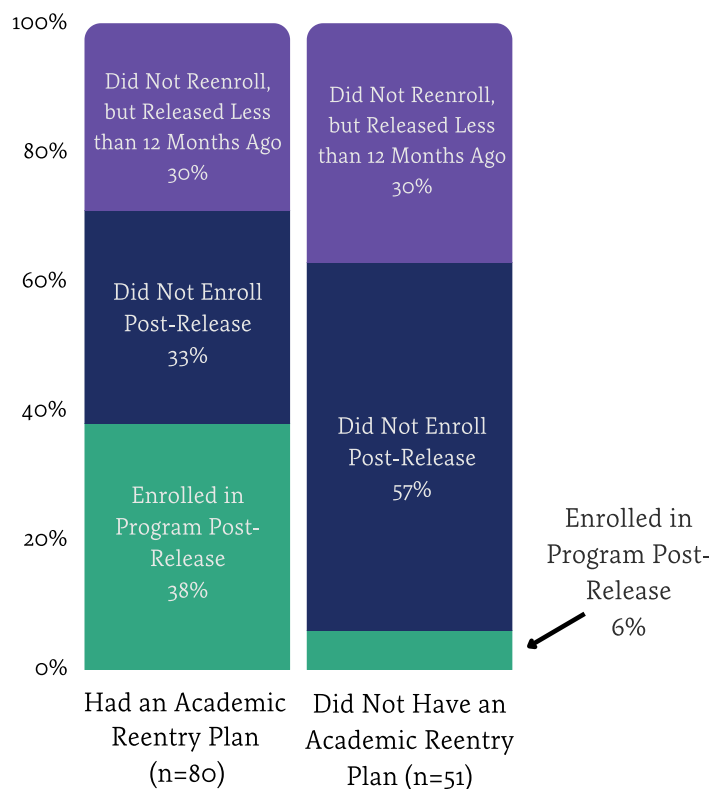
One of the most common pre-release strategies Providers shared was reentry-focused academic advising by faculty or other Provider staff, including presentations and group sessions as part of class time, in one-on-one meetings with students, and in academic reentry-focused workshops. Advising included identifying courses that would help students make progress toward their degrees and connecting students with other resources and academic supports on the Provider's campus that would be available post-release. One Provider continued advising even after programs were moved to a remote format by dedicating one computer at the facility to academic advising and reentry planning. Providers also held workshops on reentry topics of interest to students, including personal finance, computer literacy, resume writing, interview skills, career counseling, and college reenrollment, sometimes with guest speakers including CIP alumni. Providers noted that stories of alumni could have a "powerful motivating effect" on students. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and DOCCS protocols (i.e., the requirement for all guest speakers to submit volunteer applications for approval, which can take months to be processed, and additional restrictions for formerly incarcerated volunteers) created barriers that made workshops more difficult than the Providers initially envisioned.

As an additional reentry support, Providers also utilized written materials about reentry and reenrollment created for students who were expected to be released soon. For example, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity developed a NYS-specific Back to School Guide to help students prepare to continue their education in the community by providing academic reentry information to aid in the development of personal academic reentry plans.[124] Multiple Providers spoke highly of the guide: one Provider said that they were "using the Back to School Guide as our first conversation with students," and another said that they "found the Institute for Justice and Opportunity's publications to be useful." The Institute for Justice and

Opportunity also worked with Providers to incorporate the reentry resource tools into reentry programming, including developing a series of workshops based off of the Back to School Guide. Additionally, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity also produced a guide for existing and prospective college-in-prison programs on working with correctional institutions based on their work on CIP with DOCCS,[125] which provides guidance to education providers who are considering implementing a college program in a correctional setting, including lessons learned about reentry support.

Finally, Providers described that alumni networks served as useful reentry tools. One Provider launched a new alumni program that provides support and training for specific career paths. Students and faculty from a few Providers discussed the benefits of connecting CIP students with alumni. As a student from one focus group recounted,

> *"Everyone I see [who is an alumnus] is gainfully employed and pursuing education; they send [us] encouraging messages."*

Likewise, a few Providers reported organizing meetings and events for alumni in the community, which helped encourage alumni to stay in touch with one another and establish connections to services. One of these Providers partners with a local reentry-focused provider to cohost alumni events about career services, where students receive other reentry services, to more reliably reach students.

Basic Reentry Needs and Foundational Supports

Students described challenges that awaited them post-release, which most often include financial and housing difficulties, barriers to employment, and lack of technology skills, all of which may prevent them from stated educational goals to reenroll in college after release from prison.

Students expressed hesitation and uncertainty to Providers about making plans for their reentry, a sentiment that was echoed by students in focus groups. Two in 10 focus group students (20 percent) were undecided about work or did not report the type of industry in which they were interested, and 1 in 10 (10 percent) reported that they did not expect to reenroll in college after their release from prison. Broadly, students indicated a need to first get settled in their home lives (e.g., find housing) and "financially situate" themselves before making a commitment to work or school. At the same time, students, especially those returning to NYC, described an awareness of the high cost of living and the urgency of finding work quickly to support themselves. Students in multiple programs described a need for meaningful reentry support and described deciding to participate in the program specifically for the support the Providers promised in reentry, noting specific program administrators who stated that they would help students acquire housing, employment, and reenroll in education. One student said, "one of the main reasons I signed up was the reentry pamphlet. Services in general for reentry are outdated after my first [prison incarceration]... these reentry supports will help me finish my education in society."

Safe and Stable Housing

Perhaps the foundation of successful reentry is finding safe and stable housing, but stakeholders voiced that housing was exceedingly difficult for students to secure. In the student survey, 58 percent of students described housing as an obstacle to their reenrollment (see *Figure 25* in *Post-Release Reenrollment*). As one Provider put it,

"Many of our students expect to go home to a family home. Sometimes when students arrive into that situation, it's not sustainable, [and] students may become unstably housed."

In addition to whether returning students could afford housing, parole requirements[126] and public housing restrictions might also restrict housing options; for example, some students cannot live with family members due to those family members' criminal legal histories.[127] At least one Provider attributed a student's decision not to re-enroll in college to the difficulty of finding housing, noting that although the student had initially planned to enroll on campus following release, "due to challenges of his parole and [his having] a hard time securing housing...[he] has had to put enrollment on hold." To that end, one Provider suggested providing housing to people being released to help support them as they reenroll in college, by housing them with others going through the reentry and reenrollment experience. This Provider, however, noted the potential challenges of such a solution due to various policies (e.g., public housing or probation/parole restrictions) that may prohibit individuals with felonies from cohabitating.

Identification and Access to Transportation

Other practical challenges, such as securing documentation and transportation, also make reentry difficult and interfere with students' ability to secure employment, reenroll in college, and find stable housing. Providers as well DOCCS staff noted that obtaining a certificate of residence (a prerequisite for most identification cards) from local governments is often associated with a fee, and processes are inconsistent across counties, making certificates of residence difficult to obtain for students approaching reentry.[128] Providers noted that lack of identification can lead to several challenges including, but not limited to, issues applying, and qualifying for, social services; enrolling in postsecondary education in the community; and can place additional financial strain for students upon release.

In addition, Providers understood that former CIP students had difficulty traveling to school and work for financial and/or legal reasons. Obtaining a

driver's license, for example, might require paying off municipal debts (i.e., fines). One Provider noted that conditions of students' parole often include curfews, making it difficult to get to campus at certain times, and that mandatory parole meetings can be difficult to attend without reliable transportation. In order to counter some of this logistical strain stemming from financial need, one Provider paid for old DMV fines, MetroCards, and parking passes for students upon release. However, not all Providers have the financial resources to provide such services.

Technology

Students and faculty identified a need for technology training as part of reentry preparation. In the student survey, students described the available computer equipment in facilities as "really limited" and needing "better, newer computers." Providers noted the use of closed intranet systems (as described in Computer Labs in the previous section) and felt it was a "good start," but that the need to learn current technology required access to smartphones and the Internet. In the survey, students noted concerns about "trying to figure my way around" after many years incarcerated, with one student noting "I have no experience on the outside." Given that a main function of smartphones is as a map and connection to the Internet as a means to navigate the world, students understand their lack of experience with smartphones as an obstacle to successful reentry. To mitigate these concerns, one Provider offered a workshop in which they shared pictures of the main functions of a smartphone to describe their functionalities and effectively prepare students to use smartphones on the outside. Another Provider suggested providing dummy smartphones to help students practice for the way that technology, communication, and navigation works on the outside.

Students' lack of familiarity and facility with technology can make it difficult for them to reenroll upon release. One Provider reported that staff often had to

intensively guide students over the phone when registering for classes online and dedicate time to submitting relevant documentation for the students. This process created additional demands on Providers' already time-stretched staff, making it difficult to provide high-quality reentry planning for all of the students who need it. It also underscores the importance of providing technological resources and instruction to incarcerated students to the extent possible in correctional settings.

Employment

The need for students to support themselves financially upon release was mentioned repeatedly in interviews, focus groups, and the student survey, and was the single biggest priority for students preparing for reentry. A few Providers and students from nearly all focus groups emphasized the need for basic job skills support as crucial for securing employment upon release. As one Provider shared, "Students don't feel prepared to jump right into the job market [upon release]" and require additional supports in order to feel confident to do so. These supports included resumé building and cover letter writing, job interview preparation, and acquiring appropriate workwear. Many Providers expressed concern about barriers to employment for students upon release, with one explaining the concern that "students coming out [may] not have the opportunity to apply what they've learned" because "it's tough to find employment when you have a record." Students also anticipated these difficulties, citing biases in hiring that may make it difficult for them to obtain and maintain employment, with one student survey taker acknowledging that "being formerly incarcerated may lead to obstacles like employment."

In focus groups and survey responses, students described gaining and keeping employment as a top priority that could present obstacles to reenrollment in college. In response to a question about various obstacles to reenrollment, more than two-thirds of survey respondents (70 percent) identified "needing to

work to support myself and my family financially" as an obstacle (see *Figure 24*). One student elaborated in an open-ended question about obstacles to reenrollment that they would need to first "focus on financially situating myself" prior to considering reenrollment; another noted competing responsibilities and needs, saying "I am concerned about a good paying job, transportation and spending time with my kids." Another student described concern about "being able to support myself while attending school."

Providers and DOCCS stakeholders noted the success of employment-focused reentry support they had provided including in-prison job fairs and career-centered workshops (primarily held pre-COVID-19), which provided CIP students the opportunity to practice for entering the job market through mock interviews including strategies for how to address questions about gaps in employment due to incarceration. Other Providers reported relying on faculty members who know of career-centered resources in the communities to which students are returning, or sending out career opportunities to alumni networks via email. One Provider described employment-focused reentry workshops as casual "conversations" where Providers "break it down," demystifying employment prospects and careers. As the Provider further detailed, "we talk about careers...everything from [what a] career would look like to the educational piece to how much money you would make..." The Provider noted that while these workshops were useful, the Provider lacked capacity to provide more formalized workshops or one-on-one career advising, remarking "I wish I had more time to do more of it."

To inform their role in providing reentry advising for the CIP, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity undertook a labor market study to assist Providers and students to identify career paths that were related to their educational goals and achievements. However, this work was conducted pre-COVID, and Providers found that it could not be put to use as intended. In part due to the COVID-related labor market shifts and ambiguity, combined with the

time-intensity of research and one-on-one advising with students, Providers found it difficult to produce relevant, up-to-date job openings and employment connections.

Post-Release Reenrollment

CIP aimed to ensure that students enrolled in college in prison have the ability to complete their degrees while incarcerated or, at a minimum, complete a sufficient number of course credits that can provide meaningful progress toward degree completion post-release. Students shared this intention: 96 percent of CIP students surveyed reported that they intended to reenroll in college post-release, either to complete their degree or to pursue further education, often towards a Bachelor's degree. However, students and Providers described financial barriers to reenrollment and the competing priorities of housing and employment (see *Figure 24*), as well as Providers' efforts to address student needs and make reenrollment more accessible. In addition to Providers' efforts to prepare students to reenroll in college, the Institute for Justice Opportunity prepared the aforementioned Back to School Guide for students to help with the transition out of prison and in to a new type of college environment.

Financial Obstacles

In focus groups and survey responses, students said that their first priority is determining how they will support themselves financially, before they can consider how they will afford the cost of college on the outside. As one student described, "I plan to enroll upon release, but this is not the priority and is dependent on things like cost and availability," and another said, "I would like to pursue education upon release, but it depends on my employability." Students in one focus group noted that "college in prison is different" because the prison and the Provider "take care of everything for you." This concern about the affordability of college was echoed in survey responses; in response to a question about various obstacles

to reenrollment, more than three-fourths of respondents (81 percent) identified the "cost of tuition" as an obstacle (see *Figure 24*). Similarly, several Providers noted that finances are a main obstacle to enrollment, with one Provider saying,

> "I know there are often students… that maybe if they did have the funds, [then financial limitations] wouldn't get in the way of their ability to take college classes. [They] need help with that kind of thing."

Another Provider noted that the transition to becoming a student on the outside and finding the means to finance their education "comes as a bit of a shock." Most Providers reported challenges in funding CIP students' coursework at their institutions after release, as students' tuition was no longer covered by the Initiative once they leave prison. These observations centered around a similar theme: students' ability to find quality jobs is instrumental to their successful reentry as well as potential reenrollment. One Provider, for example, shared that "loans can be a source of stress, [and I am] sad to tell them I don't have a fund that would help them with a scholarship, that they have to somehow work out the finances [on their

own]." According to one Provider, one student resisted being released because they were close to completing their degree in prison, and it was unclear how they would pay for tuition once released.

To respond to this challenge, one Provider arranged presentations on financial aid to help make students aware of what options were at their disposal to pay for their education. Two Providers allocated funds to pay for students' coursework, though as one noted, these efforts weren't without challenges as "there was still a balance for the student to pay." This gap will continue to be a problem even with the landscape-changing Pell Grant eligibility expansion in 2023; while nearly all students in jails, prisons, juvenile, and civil carceral institutions, regardless of sentence or conviction type, will be qualified for Pell and TAP grants while in prison and upon release, gaps in funding will still remain. Bridging these gaps will require planning and resources in order for students to afford tuition while remaining financially stable (see *Appendix 1* for more details on Pell Reinstatement).

FIGURE 24. PERCEIVED OBSTACLES TO REENROLLMENT IN COLLEGE AS REPORTED IN THE STUDENT SURVEY (N=114)
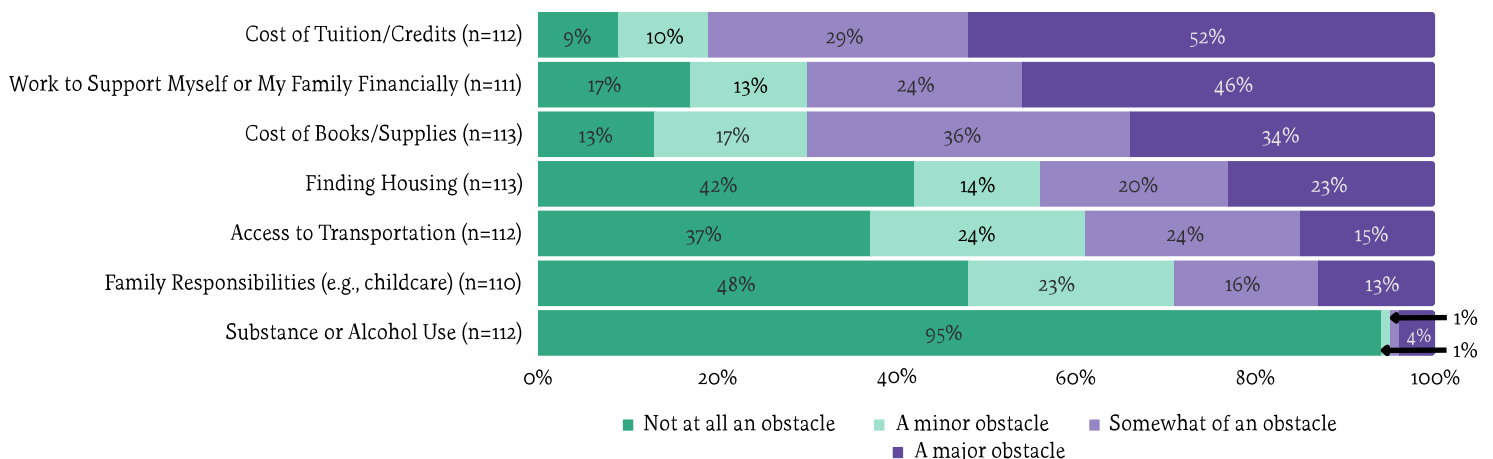
Reenrollment Rates

Despite students' articulated intentions to reenroll, the barriers they face upon reentry can prevent them from doing so. To date, few students are known to have reenrolled post-release: only 13 percent of released students who did not complete their degrees while incarcerated are known to have reenrolled in the community (see *Figure 25*). While rates were low overall, older students were more likely to reenroll post-release: these students were an average of 5 years older than those who did not reenroll (43 years old versus 38 years old, respectively).[129]

Although the differences did not rise to the level of statistical significance, Hispanic (27 percent) and Black (21 percent) students were slightly more likely than white (11 percent) students to have reenrolled. Similarly, students from Long Island/Hudson Valley (33 percent) were slightly more likely to reenroll compared to those from upstate regions (22 percent) and NYC (21 percent); however, the sample was too small to detect significant differences in reenrollment by region. Notably, the data available to Providers and CUNY ISLG may fail to fully capture the full scope of reenrollment, as students face challenges remaining in contact with Providers post-release, resulting in missing data for over one-third of released students.[130]

One student resisted being released because they were close to completing their degree in prison, and it was unclear how they would pay for tuition once released.

Most of the students who reenrolled did so with the same academic institution that they were enrolled in as CIP students (8 percent of released students), while the rest reenrolled with another institution (5 percent of released students). Notably, among students that had not yet completed their degrees at release, those who had an academic reentry plan in place were more likely than those without to be enrolled after release (38 percent compared to 6 percent, respectively).[131]

These data show that despite students' articulated intentions to reenroll, the barriers students face upon reentry can prevent them from doing so. Overall, these findings highlight reentry and reenrollment as an often under-resourced, but essential, component of successful college-in-prison programming. Across the board, students, Providers, and other stakeholders expressed a need for more comprehensive and holistic reentry support for students, particularly through additional targeted funding to support students financially and increasing Provider capacity with staff dedicated to guiding students through the transition from college in prison to college in the community.

FIGURE 25. STUDENT REENROLLMENT 12-MONTHS POST-RELEASE AMONG RELEASED NON-COMPLETERS (N=247)

Enrolled in Program Post-Release 13%

Did Not Enroll Post-Release 22%

Did Not Reenroll, but Released Less than 12 Months Ago 25%

Missing Data 40%
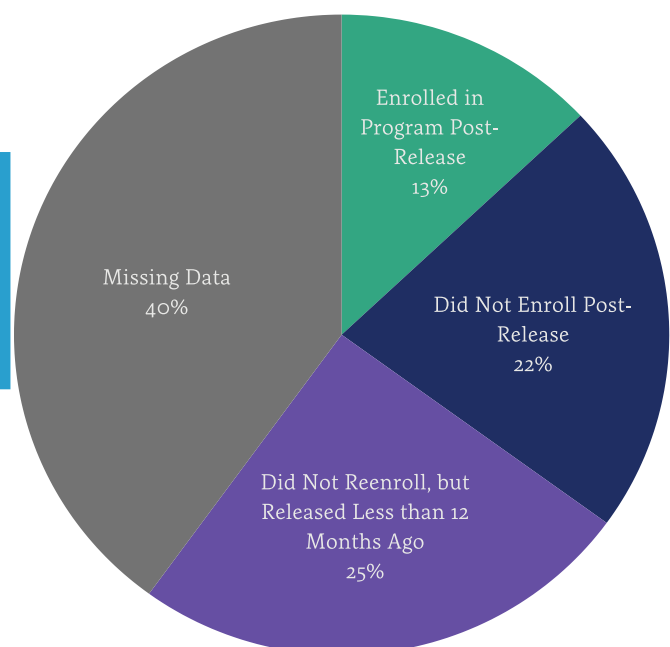
Key Recommendations for College-In-Prison Programs

From 2017 to 2022, CIP considerably expanded college-in-prison programming in New York, and the lessons learned through the Initiative can serve as a model for further expansion under Pell Grant funding and TAP reinstatement. As institutions across New York, and the country, begin to apply for Pell Grant funding to establish new or expand existing programs, this report offers guidance on how to best navigate the myriad challenges of doing so.[132] The recommendations below are draw from CUNY ISLG's process evaluation of CIP and can help providers, corrections departments, and other stakeholders consider how best to prepare for and carry out their missions to provide high-quality postsecondary education to students while incarcerated. These recommendations are grouped into five substantive areas: 1. Coordination and Collaboration between Stakeholders, 2. Academic Resources and Supports, 3. Instruction and Pedagogy, 4. Academic Reentry, and 5. Practical Reentry.

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

Offering college in a correctional setting requires the coordination of many stakeholders that, traditionally, may be accustomed to operating more independently. Accordingly, greater communication and intentional collaboration are required to facilitate the smooth operation of college in prison. Fortunately, the challenges that stakeholders experienced in the implementation of CIP can also be mitigated by other entities implementing similar college-in-prison initiatives. Relevant stakeholders should:

- **Establish buy-in among facility staff for college-in-prison programs.** Corrections facility leadership (e.g., Superintendents, Deputy Superintendent for Program Services) as well as providers should emphasize the role of college in prison in their respective institutional missions as it relates to rehabilitation, successful reentry, and public safety. Programs should additionally consider other avenues to achieve stakeholder buy-in when it is lacking, particularly reflecting the importance of college in prison in job roles and responsibilities and consider staffing specifically for these roles/programs. Additionally, it is important to anticipate internal resistance due to perceived unfairness or "equity" arguments, such as by offering benefits through which correctional officers and other facility staff can obtain postsecondary education as well.[133, 134]

- **Align application and enrollment processes across providers as much as possible.** Providers can standardize placement tests as well as admissions criteria and processes in order to: develop a shared understanding of what is expected with regard to a student's academic preparedness for college education; ease and streamline the transfer process between college-in-prison programs; and reduce administrative burdens on provider and corrections staff. These shared understandings and expectations are necessary given the likelihood that college-in-prison students are transferred to different facilities while enrolled and are unlikely to complete programs with the same Provider with which they began a college-in-prison program. Consider admissions criteria that assess student readiness for the rigor and range of instruction typical of college instruction including, but not limited to, placement exams, written essays, and the completion of remedial coursework as necessary. Whereas some degree of variation in the college-in-prison programs themselves is to be expected, standardizing application and enrollment procedures will reduce confusion surrounding student eligibility for programming as well as frustrations with the process of transferring credits from other college programs including interruptions to degree programs.

- **Ensure alignment between corrections agencies and providers around student eligibility requirements, planned transfer, and releases.** As early as possible, and ideally prior to initiation of programming, Providers should operationalize student eligibility criteria and communicate these criteria to Provider staff as well as correctional facility staff on a frequent and consistent basis to ensure alignment. When determining eligibility criteria, stakeholders should consider whether the use of ERD as a requirement for participation/eligibility in a college-in-prison program is a necessary criterion. The coordination required to determine ERD was of significant effort and confusion between Providers and DOCCS as these dates often changed, and as observed in this evaluation, all individuals in prison can benefit from college instruction even if their release dates are further away.

  In order to prevent unnecessary and unforeseen student transfers to other facilities, providers should prepare rosters of enrolled students for corrections staff at regular intervals, so that facility staff have an additional accounting of which students should receive educational holds. In so doing, stakeholders can ensure that students will not encounter mid-semester disruptions to coursework due to facility transfer and will not will not be moved until after the semester has concluded, barring competing considerations.[135] Furthermore, should a transfer be unavoidable, providers should work with corrections staff to identify a facility with a college-in-prison program to which the student may be able to be transferred and coordinate with program faculty to ensure that they are informed of transfer policies and any upcoming student transfers to better plan for the semester.[136] Ideally, more integrated information systems would allow correctional facilities and providers to jointly understand the potential impact and timing of any sentencing reductions on students' degree progress as well.

- **Establish clear data-sharing and security protocols early on to ensure the ethical use and exchange of student information.** Providers may benefit from including legal counsel in conversations surrounding data usage, tracking, and exchange as early as possible to establish common understandings of project expectations in the context of internal policies and current laws and regulations (e.g., FERPA). These conversations should also include corrections agencies, as appropriate, to ensure that planned activities are aligned with any relevant departmental polices and guidelines. Such conversations may help to resolve concerns related to data sharing and student privacy in a timely and efficient manner.

- **Allocate sufficient staffing resources to track performance and adapt programming as necessary.** Given the importance and time-intensive nature of data collection and monitoring, providers should ensure that they have dedicated staff lines to fulfill any internal and external data obligations. The work of tracking the student data necessary for monitoring performance and using insights to inform program changes requires dedicating staff time above and beyond day-to-day program administration. In particular, programs may benefit by allocating, at minimum, a portion of a staff person's time to this purpose. Where possible, providers should seek to use data management systems to keep track of important data in a streamlined and efficient manner, which in turn can provide valuable information on their programs.

- **Participate in networked communities in order to create a shared knowledge base about the administration and instruction of college-in-prison programs.** During CIP, Providers (educational administrators as well as faculty) participated in Learning Exchanges for this express purpose. Additionally, many providers also participated in existing coalitions such as NY-CHEP,[137] which provide a forum through which

individuals and organizations can share best practices, organize and advocate on behalf of students, and generate new approaches and solutions to issues unique to providing education in a carceral space.

- **Align course offerings and standards across postsecondary educational programs offered in a given region or among participating providers in a common initiative.** In so doing, students will be better positioned to finish their degrees in the event that they are transferred to another facility or program or are released prior to completing their degrees. This alignment can also decrease the obstacles that students can face when attempting reenrollment by ensuring that the credits they earned toward a degree at one institution align with the requirements at another institution. Aligning course requirements across programs will also help to establish expectations for instructional quality and rigor as well as create an imperative for adherence to these thresholds. Corrections agencies could require a minimum level of transferability for providers to offer programming in their facilities.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

CIP stakeholders were committed to providing students with an educational experience that, as much as possible, mirrored those experiences of students in the community. However, many providers operate with limited resources, and they operate programs in facilities concerned first and foremost with ensuring the safety of incarcerated individuals, corrections staff, and visitors. With this balance in mind, we recommend that stakeholders implementing similar initiatives:

- **Update and expand access to library and college-level reading materials in facility classrooms and student spaces.** These approaches could include: expanding the availability of course assigned texts, auditing existing resources to ensure that they are up-to-date, streamlining the procurement of inter-library loans (ILL) to avoid extensive delays, or securing a portion of program funding to provide students with academic texts. Additionally, JSTOR has developed two options that can enable timely access to resources for incarcerated students and comply with corrections policies on material review and approval.[138] To the extent possible, corrections agencies should expand opportunities to access these resources in collaboration with faculty (e.g., more frequent study hall hours in libraries).

- **Ensure that physical spaces and resources are conducive to learning to the extent feasible**. These include the installation and maintenance of computer labs within facilities, keeping in mind logistics and policies related to review of materials, network security and internet access, operating hours, and staffing. As many stakeholders suggested, when possible, students could also be housed in the same dormitories to minimize distractions and increase school-related interactions, or otherwise be provided more dedicated time or access to resources and appropriate study and work spaces.[139] Additionally, course-related books could be housed in the dorms instead of relying on facility libraries, which are typically not accessible to students on a daily basis. Corrections and providers should work together to determine the best use of the individual physical spaces available in their facility environment and what, if any, resources can be supplemented by corrections or by providers.

- **Increase the availability of remedial coursework to support academic preparedness among students.** Future college-in-prison initiatives should anticipate that many applicants, including those who have completed their high school education or equivalency requirements, will need to take remedial classes in order to be adequately prepared for college-level coursework. If funding is available, future initiatives

should also consider supporting providers such that they can include these courses or providing other programming (e.g., tutoring services) to be able to meet these needs. These providers, in turn, should emphasize this aspect of the program when recruiting potential program faculty. Funding for remedial courses can also help with student's academic preparedness, though may require a trade-off in the ability to use financial aid (e.g., Pell and TAP) for a future semester of coursework necessary for degree completion if funding is applied to necessary, remedial coursework.

- **Incorporate early and ongoing supports and interventions for writing needs**. Students could benefit from instructors employing specific learning methods to enhance students' writing exposure and capabilities, such as: exclusively assigning written work, rather than multiple choice or short-answer formats; coupling writing learning objectives with individual session plans over the course of the semester; and providing ongoing feedback not only on content mastery but on writing skills. Providers may also consider options for providing access to resources comparable to an on-campus writing center for incarcerated students or offering a writing skills course that would be credit-bearing and applicable to degree completion for relevant areas of study.

INSTRUCTION AND PEDAGOGY

Across CIP, Providers and faculty emphasized their commitment to providing high-quality, rigorous instruction to incarcerated students. As detailed in this report, teaching in a carceral environment is accompanied by many challenges unique to the setting that can, but need not, impact the quality of instruction. In order to ensure that college-in-prison programming is commensurate in quality to college education in more traditional settings, providers and/or other jurisdictions interested in adopting similar programs should:

- **Recruit faculty prepared for the realities of teaching in carceral settings.** When possible, Providers should hire faculty that have prior experience working in a prison environment, within the criminal legal system more broadly including reentry focused fields, and/or with people who have been incarcerated. This practice can shorten the time needed to acclimate the instructor to the correctional setting and the facility's policies and procedures and lead to higher levels of faculty retention. Ideally, providers would also provide access to training materials[140] for new instructors outlining key differences between teaching college inside a prison compared to in the community, including resources on trauma-informed pedagogy; key policies regarding facility operations; administrative demands of gaining security clearance and having class materials reviewed and approved; and strategies for addressing common challenges in a college-in-prison environment.

- **Offer training on and promote inclusion of trauma-informed pedagogy for faculty.** Faculty must be cognizant of the ways in which the impacts of trauma can affect an individual's ability to learn, especially in a correctional environment. The processes of teaching and learning are mediated through students' lived experiences, and necessarily must be enacted with the intention of countering the lingering and persistent experiences of trauma. Engaging in a trauma-responsive teaching practice[141] is a necessary condition of providing an equitable educational experience for the incarcerated population, when compared to their on-campus counterparts. Additionally, providing faculty with tools about how to engage in such practices may lead to changes in course and class planning such that learners are more responsively engaged, which may improve faculty experience navigating issues central to correctional education and potentially ease concerns of turnover.

- **Replicate the faculty-student relationships of on-campus learning as much as possible.** Considering the challenges of developing strong faculty-student relationships in facilities, some instructors have found a seminar-style classroom teaching approach to be most effective in enabling stronger connections with students, and with it, greater engagement in course content.[142] Class sizes in facilities tend to be small, allowing instructors to weave the lecture into a more informal discussion and foster more direct and individualized engagement with students. Additionally, technologies that enable direct faculty-student communication (e.g., J-Pay) should also be pursued in accordance with corrections policies, and to the extent possible, facilitated by corrections so that providers and students do not incur the costs for this communication given the rehabilitative function of college in prison.

- **Establish in-person instruction as the primary mode of course delivery.** In-person instruction was viewed as far superior by the vast majority of stakeholders when compared to remote instruction for many reasons including, but not limited to: the capacity for real-time feedback, the ease of asking questions or seeking clarification, enabling richer class discussion, greater options for instructional format (e.g., lecture, discussion, seminar), and the ability to more easily develop meaningful faculty-student relationships. For these reasons, and for the sake of providing a commensurate educational experience to those students who are engaged in instruction in the community and on campus, in-person instruction should be considered the gold standard and the minimum foundation required to engage in equitable educational practice.

- **Consider remote instruction specifically to expand access to coursework (when in-person instruction is not feasible), materials, and enrichment.** Remote instruction was not preferable for of the many reasons described earlier in this report, but can provide some meaningful opportunities for students to engage in opportunities that might not otherwise be possible in a prison setting, including courses for which an instructor cannot travel to the facility, guest lectures, and demonstrations. In order to provide remote instruction as successfully as possible, on-site facility staff often need to engage in extensive coordination with educational program administrators as well as instructors to facilitate the distribution of course resources and assignments to students, and students' completed work-product to instructors for timely feedback. In order to replicate the possibility of real-time feedback as much as possible in a remote setting, corrections and providers must work together to determine a method by which students and faculty can engage in ongoing communication about assignments and course material outside of class sessions.

ACADEMIC REENTRY

CIP focused explicitly on incarcerated individuals who are approaching release back into the community. At its core, the Initiative invested in education as a means to improve post-release employment outcomes and stability, and provide a more strengths-based means of ensuring public safety. Nonetheless, stakeholders experienced many challenges when it came to students' reenrollment in degree programs post-release and gaps in academic supports and services that could provide meaningful differences for students navigating education, employment, and life post release. Providers and other jurisdictions interested in adopting similar programs should:

- **Provide students with copies of transcripts and other relevant documents at regular intervals**. Students face significant barriers to reenrollment in the community or when transferring to other facilities, often due to technological divides and inability to procure information about their educational

history. Providing students with transcripts and other relevant documentation may reduce administrative burden and ease the process of reenrolling in college for these students, allowing them to continue their education without a break in coursework and, therefore, have a greater likelihood of completing their degrees.

- **Coordinate with postsecondary institutions to support re-enrollment after release.** To further support re-enrollment, community campuses can work with formerly incarcerated students in more intentional ways to support them in the application process and in connecting with them prior to release. This support includes educating main campus staff (i.e., administrative and instructional) about issues relevant to the formerly incarcerated population (e.g., challenges with technology including internet access, lack of stable housing or transportation, and other challenges with reentry) prior to their engagement with students. These staff can help to ensure that those who wish to stay enrolled with their current programs are able to do so without reapplying and addressing potential barriers to access such as questions about felony convictions on college applications.

- **Regularly conduct labor market research to determine which fields of study could best prepare students for projected job openings.** This research includes identifying specific occupations, training requirements, and any barriers to entry for those with conviction histories (e.g., outstanding financial debt, securing documentation, finding housing). On its own, however, labor market research was found to have a short shelf-life (i.e., in the time it takes for a report to be created, the needs of the labor market may have shifted). Therefore, this work needs to be updated on an ongoing basis as well as provide for students an understanding of how courses and degree paths can relate to evergreen marketable skills and specific career paths. Providers should also identify community partners who can help support released students with the pursuit of relevant course offerings and potential training/credential programs in areas outside of the providers' local catchment area.

- **Foster connections between college-in-prison alumni, and among alumni and relevant mentors.** Providers should curate resources to better connect individuals returning to the community and interested in continuing on with their degree coursework. These resources could include: inclusive alumni networks; mentorships for formerly incarcerated students (with other formerly incarcerated students and with others in relevant occupational fields or common lived experience); and funding/scholarships to support matriculation, course materials, and other needs related to education. Providers would need to coordinate compliance of these networks with corrections (e.g., DOCCS[143]) policies about fraternization among those on community supervision and apply for exemptions, where appropriate.

- **Provide opportunities for faculty and program administrators to establish and maintain some form of regulated contact with students after release to mirror the mentoring and support that traditional students receive in the community.** Students, especially those who have been formerly incarcerated, can benefit from robust support networks as they search for gainful employment and establish their careers. CIP faculty, however, were not consistently permitted to keep in contact with their former students, an obstacle that prevented their ability to help students with their academic reentry including course, mentoring, career counseling, and additional areas of support. Potentially, foreclosing college-in-prison students from an opportunity that their traditional counterparts receive could compound existing inequities in their educational and social trajectories rather than making them more expansive.

PRACTICAL REENTRY

Students faced a number of practical reentry concerns upon release into the community. As Providers learned, students had many foundational needs (e.g., housing, employment, food security) that were not being fulfilled by the existing infrastructure. Stakeholders also experienced challenges of developing and administering reentry support prior to and following release from incarceration, resulting from their limited capacity and expertise and the the varying availability of resources across the state. Accordingly, stakeholders and individuals interested in pursuing similar initiatives should:

- **Coordinate and systematize educational reentry policies and practices between providers, corrections, and other stakeholders as appropriate.** The standardization of these policies should be memorialized in written documentation outlining a comprehensive shared vision for reentry and the roles and responsibilities of each agency in providing reentry support to incarcerated students based on domain of support (e.g., housing, academic support, identification). This documentation should include policies such as topics providers are permitted to discuss with students in class, regulations regarding student-provider communication after students' release, and responsibilities of providers whose students may be transferred to other facilities prior to release. Memorializing roles and responsibilities will reduce miscommunication between various reentry stakeholders and allow for more efficient collaboration and the provision of more timely support.

  Corrections agencies should also develop and communicate written expectations for preparing and administering reentry workshops, resource fairs, and other informational events hosted in correctional facilities. When possible, agencies should collaborate with providers who have had prior success operating reentry-related sessions to share recommendations and best practices, which may strengthen proposals and expedite the review process in other facilities.

- **Develop streamlined communication protocols and processes between providers, corrections, and other stakeholders regarding reentry planning.** At minimum, future initiatives should develop streamlined processes through which correctional agencies notify providers when a student's release date has changed (e.g., through LCTA[144]) or been confirmed (e.g., when a parole board has approved supervised release). Providing these updates at a frequent cadence and through established communication channels will allow providers to prioritize planning for students closest to release, coordinate with community-based supports, and better prepare students for reentry challenges in general and for college re-enrollment in particular. Providers should consider allotting for dedicated staff time/positions to provide students with robust reentry support, academic, or otherwise. This may include, at minimum, allotting a portion of an employee's time to providing reentry supports to students and coordinating with corrections agencies as appropriate. Providers and corrections both will require dedicated time and resources to clarify roles and responsibilities as well as to ensure efficient and comprehensive coordination.

- **Offer support for job-searching and securing employment.** Providers, for example, can offer in-prison job fairs and career-centered workshops, which could include guest speakers from potential employers as well as formerly incarcerated individuals who have succeeded in finding gainful employment in the community. A key component of these job fairs is offering students the opportunity to practice for a job search through mock interviews and preparing to address questions about the reasons for their employment gaps. Providers may also consider building out services such as resume and cover letter workshops, guidance on

email and text etiquette, and support with finding appropriate workwear. In addition to these supports, students could benefit from information about how individual courses taken, skills developed within these courses, or chosen degree paths as a whole can be marketed toward specific industries or occupations. Providers, including faculty members, can also provide students with career-centered resources in the communities or on campuses, as appropriate, to which students are returning, or to send out career opportunities to alumni networks via email.

- **Increase funding for reentry resources to expand their availability and depth.** Corrections, Providers and other relevant stakeholders should coordinate with local and state governments to increase the funding, and therefore availability, of community-based reentry resources, particularly in regions where these resources are scarce, such as Central and Western New York. In particular, policymakers must recognize the importance of employment, education, and housing in successful reentry, and increase the availability of, awareness of, and access to these supports. Other foundational needs—including food security and acquiring identification—must also be provided for in order for students to reasonably consider reenrollment. Future initiatives should also consider providing academic funding for students following release, particularly to provide for expenses not covered through Pell and TAP, so students are able to finish their coursework and enhance their employment opportunities, without having to sacrifice finishing their academic coursework for financial stability.

- **Incorporate supports for acclimating students to the Internet and developing comfort with technology.** Many students reported anxieties about technology (e.g., navigating the Internet, using smartphones, and acquiring basic computer skills) not only for academic coursework but for the needs of everyday life. Providers, corrections, and other stakeholders should consider, given corrections policies and protocols, how they can provide support for developing these skills pre-release and how they can continue to support facility with technology after release as well. These supports will better prepare students for the technological realities that accompany reentry to the community, and may also help them better navigate the challenges of re-enrollment following release.

- **Develop and codify a set of best practices to support successful reentry.** Corrections agencies, college- in-prison technical assistance providers, and education providers should work together to coordinate a more comprehensive reentry support system for students. These approaches may include information and best practices in such areas as advising and mentoring, alumni networks, key reentry processes, and contact information for relevant reentry support. Stakeholders should collaborate to update a statewide guidebook or create other resources for students building from existing work when possible (e.g., Institute for Justice and Opportunity's *Back to School Guide*[145] and the New York Public Library's report, *Connections: A Free Guide for Formerly Incarcerated People*[146]). In addition, education providers may benefit from hiring staff with prior experience in the provision of reentry support or coordinating with state and local Reentry Task Forces.

Conclusion

The College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative sought to meaningfully expand and enhance access to quality postsecondary education for incarcerated individuals in New York. Justice-involved individuals traditionally have had limited opportunities to pursue higher education prior to their incarceration, and they face substantial challenges enrolling in the community post-release. During the five full academic years of the Initiative (i.e., Fall 2017 to Spring 2022), CIP substantially expanded access to postsecondary programs across the state. CIP increased the number of available programs, the capacity within these programs, courses, and degree paths for incarcerated individuals who have traditionally been excluded from higher education, including BIPOC, and those from historically under-resourced areas. There are now 31 degree/certificate programs across more than 30 institutions of higher education operating across 30 of the 44 state prisons.[147]

CIP increased the number of available programs, the capacity within these programs, courses, and degree paths for incarcerated individuals who have traditionally been excluded from higher education.

Providers and their faculty affirmed that, constraints of the prison environment aside, that they were able to provide instruction that was commensurate in quality and academic rigor to their equivalent courses on campus. Providers, DOCCS facility staff, and faculty worked collaboratively to implement creative solutions in providing college instruction using the resources available to them throughout the Initiative, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic helped to usher in the inclusion of resources (i.e., technology) that were not commonly, if at all, used in correctional education across New York including video conferencing, the Internet, and computers. While this provided a useful test case for remote instruction, students and Providers alike all maintained a preference for in-person instruction to benefit from real-time feedback, more meaningful faculty-student relationships, and richer class discussions, among other benefits.

The Initiative also created the necessary infrastructure, through curriculum alignment and articulation and transfer agreements, to better facilitate the continuation of coursework such that more students can successfully complete their degrees in cases of facility transfer or after they are released. Students' participation in college can be interrupted for several reasons, often without notice; for released students in particular, addressing basic needs take precedence over reenrollment in college. Establishing flexible pathways for students via course alignments and transfer agreements allows them to continue their degrees within and outside of the correctional setting and helps mitigate inequities in access to higher education.

CIP also led to more robust reentry supports through the creation of tools and resources to help colleges provide incarcerated students with individualized academic reentry plans that support the continuation of academic programs upon release. While these resources were valued by stakeholders, the need to further enhance reentry supports remains. Re-enrollment in the community remains particularly low as other student needs take precedence, such as obtaining employment, securing safe housing, or abiding by parole requirements, and students face significant barriers in balancing these needs with their educational aspirations including earning a college degree.

Findings from the CIP evaluation offer several key insights to inform the broader field of higher education in prison. First, coordination and collaboration in the development and provision of programming are of utmost importance as it involves investment from academic institutions, government agencies, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders. Although security restrictions inhibit many of the features of traditional college classrooms in the correctional setting, with dedication and intentionality, incarcerated students can have access to high-quality instruction, up-to-date academic and technological resources, and other opportunities such that the education they receive in prison facilities reflects that which is available in the community to a large extent. Furthermore, more often than not, incarcerated students will be released without having completed their degree and will face substantial hurdles in completing it in the community due to competing needs or limited finances. Providers, corrections, and other stakeholders would benefit from systematizing reentry policies and best practices to better prepare students to adjust to the practical realities of returning to the community along with the support required to resume their college education.

Providers, corrections, and other stakeholders would benefit from systematizing reentry policies and best practices to better prepare students to adjust to the practical realities of returning to the community along with the support required to resume their college education.

However, despite renewed investments and interest in postsecondary education in prison, New York's college-in-prison landscape remains smaller than before federal and state financial aid was first eliminated decades ago. With momentum behind the reinstatement of TAP and the reinstatement of Pell Grants along with the support of NY-CHEP, NYS has the opportunity to provide high quality, postsecondary education across the entire DOCCS system in a more coordinated, comprehensive way. In particular, this expansion would support initiating new programming in Northern and Western New York where most DOCCS facilities are located and where there is significant unmet demand; even in downstate facilities, programs regularly operate at capacity. Reentry providers will need to expand their supports accordingly in these areas as well. Prison education is in its watershed moment and may soon be able to deliver on the promise of making high quality, postsecondary education accessible for the first time in many of these students' lives, rectifying a decades-long disparity in educational access while contributing to more successful reentry and safer communities. The College-in-Prison Reentry Initiative offers a blueprint to do just that.

Appendix 1. Pell Grant Eligibility Requirements

As of 2023, college-in-prison programs are now able to apply for Pell Grant funding to cover costs associated with providing postsecondary education to incarcerated students. There are a number of eligibility requirements for programs that relate to which students can be covered by these grants as well as what the programs themselves must offer to be eligible. In short, not all incarcerated people who wish to take postsecondary classes qualify for Pell Grant funding, and programs that want to apply for funding must meet certain parameters to receive it. The full details of the eligibility criteria below are outlined in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.[148]

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY:

- Pell Grant eligibility applies to nearly all students in jails, prisons, juvenile, and civil carceral institutions, regardless of sentence or conviction type.[149, 150] Students must possess a high school diploma or GED/HSE.[151]

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY:

- Programs must be determined by state departments of corrections to be "operating in the best interest of students," based on rates of students continuing education post-release, job placement rates, earnings, recidivism rates, experience and credentials of instructors, turnover rates of instructors, transferability of credits, and academic and career services.[152]

- All college-in-prison programs must be offered by an institution of higher education that has been approved to operate in a correctional facility by the appropriate state department of corrections.

- Programs that offer professional licensure or certification will be required to provide necessary educational requirements for students to earn professional licensure or certification in the state where the correctional facility is located.

- Programs must offer credits that are transferrable to at least one higher education institution in the state where the correctional facility is located, or in the state where most of the incarcerated population will return to after release.

Appendix 2. Initiative Stakeholders

To achieve its wide-reaching aims, CIP brought together many stakeholders from government and higher education in New York.

THE MANHATTAN DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The Manhattan District Attorney's Office (DANY) created the CJII in 2014 and CIP in 2017, and members of CUNY ISLG and DANY's Strategic Planning and Policy unit were responsible for the implementation of CIP in DOCCS facilities.

THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPERVISION (DOCCS) AND NEW YORK STATE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

DOCCS is an agency of the New York State government (NYS) and in partnership with the Office of the Governor, provides critical strategic direction and thought partnership to ensure the long-term sustainability of college in prison in NYS. DOCCS currently oversees 44 correctional facilities as well as seven regional parole offices across the state, striving to maintain safe and secure facilities while addressing incarcerated individuals' needs and preparing them for release.[153, 154] To facilitate reentry, DOCCS offers an array of programs and services within its facilities through its Program Services Department, including substance abuse treatment, anger management, and domestic violence counseling, and sex offender treatment. Within this department, the Academic Education Unit offers educational and vocational programming, including adult basic education, high school equivalency (HSE), special education, and college education programs. Each DOCCS facility has an Education Supervisor or similar person who is responsible for supervising internal education staff, planning program curricula, approving instructional materials, liaising with external providers, and monitoring student progress.

For CIP, DOCCS Education Supervisors and other facility staff maintained working relationships with the Providers, provided space and resources for programming, identified students who met program eligibility, and coordinated the transfer of students to different facilities as directed by DOCCS' central office. In addition, the Program Planning, Research and Evaluation unit at DOCCS' central office provided ongoing expertise and support for the Initiative.

DOCCS also hosts an annual college-in-prison convening to share updates on relevant departmental policies or initiatives with all postsecondary program Providers and DOCCS facility-level leadership and administrators. Though most CIP stakeholders participated in these convenings during the Initiative, the scope of these events is broader than CIP and pertains to all college-in-prison programs across the state, including those not funded by CIP.

THE CUNY INSTITUTE FOR STATE & LOCAL GOVERNANCE (CUNY ISLG)

CUNY ISLG is a nonpartisan research and policy institute within the City University of New York (CUNY) that works with government and non-government organizations to improve public systems. CUNY ISLG was selected as the technical assistance consultant for CJII through a competitive solicitation process in 2014, and managed the CJII solicitation and contracting process, provided guidance and oversight to award recipients, conducted performance measurement, and oversaw independent evaluators for selected investments.

Specific to CIP, CUNY ISLG oversaw implementation of the Initiative, working closely with DOCCS, DANY, the Providers, and the Education and Reentry Coordinator. CUNY ISLG staff met regularly with the Education and Reentry Coordinator and Providers to discuss program progress, address challenges, share best practices, and otherwise support the project.

Finally, to monitor the success of CIP, CUNY ISLG collected quantitative and qualitative performance data on CIP students, led the five-year process evaluation, which is the focus of this report, and also oversees the Vera Institute's outcome evaluation and cost-benefit analysis released in 2023, and final report in 2024.

EDUCATION AND REENTRY COORDINATOR

Together, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity (formerly the Prisoner Reentry Institute) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the State University of New York (SUNY) partnered to serve as the Education and Reentry Coordinator of CIP in order to facilitate reentry planning, monitor educational quality assurance, and provide general program support to CIP Providers. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity and SUNY liaised directly with Providers and DOCCS and report to CUNY ISLG and DANY.

The Institute for Justice and Opportunity at John Jay College of Criminal Justice

The Institute for Justice and Opportunity is a research institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, which is part of the CUNY system. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity aims to reduce recidivism through policy advocacy, direct service, and collaborative partnerships that support formerly incarcerated people returning to their communities across New York.

The Institute for Justice and Opportunity monitored CIP Providers' academic reentry planning and provided direct technical assistance by advising on additional reentry support services within each program. Specifically, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity assisted Providers in designing reentry processes that assessed individual students' reentry needs, identified resources available online or in their return communities, and connected students to those resources and to appropriate postsecondary institutions upon release. As part of this work, Institute for Justice and Opportunity circulated resources with Providers that would assist with the work of connecting degree programs and class offerings with emerging workforce needs across New York.

Finally, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity was the primary entity responsible for convening the Annual Learning Exchanges where Providers, CUNY ISLG, and other CIP stakeholders shared resources and information in order to improve CIP implementation. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity held an in-person Learning Exchange in 2019 and planned to hold another in-person Exchange in 2020, but was forced to cancel on account of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity held a virtual Learning Exchange in 2021 and held a workshop titled "College in Prison from a Trauma Responsive Lens" in 2022. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity managed an online resource platform for Providers, and through its role in fostering the exchange of information and best practices, created the "Back to School Guide": a statewide resource directory that provides information about local organizations in counties across the state that provide educational reentry services, spotlighting resources in upstate counties in addition to detailing resources downstate where organizations are more well-known.[155] Additionally, the Institute for Justice and Opportunity also produced a guide for existing and prospective college-in-prison programs on

working with correctional institutions based on their work on CIP with DOCCS,[156] which provides guidance to education Providers who are considering implementing a college program in a correctional setting, including lessons learned about reentry support.

The State University of New York Higher Education for the Justice-Involved (SUNY HEJI)

SUNY is a state-supported comprehensive university system that serves nearly 1.3 million students per year in 64 institutions; it offers certificates and associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees across more than 7,500 programs. SUNY's role in CIP was to align, to the extent possible, course requirements and degree offerings across CIP-funded education programs. As part of this process, SUNY developed a set of standards for prison education in New York based on lessons learned in CIP's implementation. SUNY was responsible for creating and executing the articulation and transfer agreements between participating CIP institutions based on these core standards. SUNY also assisted in the planning of the Learning Exchanges and the College in Prison from a Trauma Responsive Lens workshop.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

During CIP, seven Education Providers (Providers), or higher education institutions located in NYS (see *Figure 1*), provided college in prison at 17 correctional facilities spread across the state, including four facilities that did not previously offer degree programs.[157] Although all seven Providers shared the broad CIP goals, their programs varied in ways that reflected their home campuses, their experience with correctional education, and their financial resources and capacity. Among these Providers are both public and private institutions offering a range of degree types, including associate's and bachelor's degrees. Five of the seven Providers operated independent, stand-alone programs, and the other two in collaboration with other institutions or organizations.[158] The Providers had a range of experience, from first-time to decades-long programs. Many of the Providers used CIP funds to expand existing programs at the same correctional institutions where they previously provided instruction, whereas others were able to offer programs at facilities that previously lacked programs or to award degrees in programs that previously did not do so. At present, all Providers continue to offer programs they initiated or expanded during CIP.

Providers worked with DOCCS over the course of the Initiative to identify students who meet program eligibility criteria,[159] after which the Providers conducted their own admissions processes for their degree or certificate programs. CIP was designed to support the same students each year until they earned their degree or certificate, exited the program for another reason, or five years passed, whichever occurred first for each student. As students exited the program, Providers were permitted to use the funding to enroll new students.

Each year, Providers delivered a required number, type, and quality of classes that allowed for students to progress along a degree or certification path. For reentry support, Providers aimed to develop individualized plans for students nearing release. These plans included reentry support and post-release college enrollment assistance that were tailored to students' particular needs. CIP aimed to offer support to students post-release for at least six months, wherever they resided in New York. The level of reentry support varied by Provider, and the Education and Reentry Coordinator worked with Providers to develop and increase their reentry support capacity.

Appendix 3: Research Evaluation Activities and Analytical Approach

RESEARCH EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Interviews

CUNY ISLG researchers conducted 63 interviews with 68 CIP stakeholders. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and took place in person or via phone call or Zoom (i.e., video conference). Interview participants included DOCCS Central Office staff (including Assistant Commissioners and departmental Directors), DOCCS facility-level staff,[160] (including superintendents, education supervisors, and deputy superintendents for program services), Education Provider administrators and faculty, the Education and Reentry Coordinator (including both the Institute for Justice and Opportunity and SUNY), DANY leadership, and CUNY ISLG non-research staff including program and grants managers.

Interview questions varied by stakeholder group, but generally focused on program design and Initiative goals, including background, context, and understanding of the Initiative; the fidelity of program implementation across sites; the quality of working relationships among the different partners; the development of programmatic, curricular, and pedagogical standards; COVID-19 adjustments and implications; and transition/reentry planning supports and services. Most interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder to verify notes, but otherwise were not transcribed.[161]

Focus Groups with Students

CUNY ISLG conducted 12 focus groups (one to two per facility)[162] with a total of 105 students (see *Appendices 4* and *5* for self-reported data provided by focus group participants). In each focus group, CUNY ISLG facilitated a discussion that focused on student experiences in the program, including their overall perceptions of the program, their educational needs and goals, their perceptions of program challenges and suggestions for improvement, their experiences during COVID-19, their plans for reentry, and any unmet needs. Student focus groups took place immediately before or after regularly scheduled classes and lasted for 60 to 90 minutes.[163] To recruit students, CUNY ISLG obtained course schedules from Providers and worked with Providers to identify courses with sufficient numbers of CIP-eligible students for both observations and focus groups. After selecting a course for observation (see below) and focus group outreach, DOCCS facility staff and Provider faculty jointly announced the opportunity to participate in a voluntary focus group and provided a sign-up sheet two to three weeks prior to CUNY ISLG site visits. Before each focus group, students completed a short, anonymous survey to collect basic information about participants and to better understand the overall representativeness of focus group participants with respect to CIP students and individuals within DOCCS overall. The survey included items about demographic characteristics, education background, and history with the criminal legal system. CUNY ISLG administered surveys to all 105 focus group participants. On the whole, focus group participants were similar to the broader group of students in the Initiative (see *Appendix 4*).

Student Surveys

In addition to focus group activities, CUNY ISLG coordinated with Education Supervisors (DOCCS facility staff) to administer an anonymous student survey with 114 respondents to learn about their experiences in the program and about their plans and preparation for release and reentry (see Appendices 4, 5, and 6 for self-reported data provided by student survey takers).[164] The survey was made available in CIP classrooms across the seven above named facilities. The survey took about 15-20 minutes to complete and was administered in Spring 2022. Students completed the survey and placed them in sealed envelopes, which were then mailed to CUNY ISLG.

Classroom Observations

CUNY ISLG conducted 12 site visits to DOCCS facilities, including observation of 11 different classes[165] offered through CIP, each containing approximately 5 to 20 students.[166] CUNY ISLG observed classes during their regularly scheduled times for approximately one hour, paying particular attention to interactions between students and faculty, student engagement, teaching style and quality of instruction, adjustments made for COVID-19 remote instruction (as applicable), levels of support for transition/reentry planning (as applicable), and ways in which the program is situated within the broader prison environment/context.

Meeting and Event Observations

CUNY ISLG non-research staff served as grant managers for the seven Providers as well as for the Education and Reentry Coordinator, and conducted quarterly check-in calls with the Initiative's stakeholders. These calls typically lasted for 30-60 minutes. In addition, CUNY ISLG non-research staff liaised with CIP stakeholders in the planning of Initiative-wide convenings. As part of the process evaluation activities, CUNY ISLG research staff observed and participated in regular check-in calls, meetings, and convenings to monitor ongoing implementation progress and challenges. During these observations, CUNY ISLG research staff took note of program operations; coordination amongst program partners; staffing and organizational changes; reentry programming; successes and challenges; and sustainability. In total, research staff observed 235 check-in calls and seven events/convenings.

Program Material Review

CUNY ISLG collected CIP program materials such as scopes of work, operational plans, program policies, grant reports, and syllabi to understand each program as well as variations across programs. CUNY ISLG assessed these materials to understand program goals, implementation fidelity, adjustments made for COVID-19, best practices, and opportunities for improvement.

Administrative Data

All seven Providers submitted case-level quantitative data on CIP students to CUNY ISLG. CUNY ISLG identified variables of interest based on Initiative goals and common themes in higher education,[167] including a focus on program enrollment, progression, and degree completion. More specifically, CUNY ISLG collected data on student demographics; course enrollment; cumulative credits earned and remaining for

degree completion; GPA; reasons for program exit; and reenrollment in the community. Other variables were reflective of the correctional setting in which these programs operate, e.g., students' last place of residence, their earliest scheduled release date (ERD), facility locations and security levels, and the provision of academic reentry plans. In total, CUNY ISLG received individual-level data on 931 students. See *Appendix 5* for a list of variables.

Qualitative Report Review

Providers submitted semesterly qualitative reports that provided further clarification on how the programs were progressing in meeting of the Initiative's goals and objectives. These reports included sections on application and enrollment processes; instructional methods and course delivery; collaboration with other CIP stakeholders; and reentry planning. Providers were also encouraged to share successes and challenges, goals for subsequent semesters and any long-term planning for program sustainability.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

CUNY ISLG used NVivo to code and analyze all qualitative data, including interviews, focus groups, program materials, semester reports, program observations, and notes from check-in calls and convenings. The coding scheme reflected the goals of the research questions and was developed iteratively based on emergent themes within the data; therefore, within the overall coding structure, CUNY ISLG identified subthemes using a grounded coding approach. CUNY ISLG analyzed quantitative data (e.g., student surveys and administrative data) using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The findings that follow were informed by both the qualitative and quantitative methods; and were structured to document the implementation of the Initiative, and to assess the Initiative's efforts across three substantive areas that broadly align with the first three principal aims of CIP: 1. Expanding Access to College in Prison; 2. Ensuring Instructional Quality, Alignment, and Transferability; and 3. Improving and Expanding Reentry. Analysis pertaining to the fourth aim is primarily embedded in the latter two sections given that this work supported the Initiative in these two key areas.

Appendix 4: Demographic Characteristics of Student Focus Group Participants, Student Survey Takers, and CIP Students Overall

Tables A4-1 through A4-3 contain demographic information about CIP students overall, as well as student survey takers and focus group participants.

Table A4-1 compares key demographic characteristics from administrative data on all CIP students to self-reported data from student survey takers and focus group participants. Focus group participants and survey takers were similar demographically to CIP students overall:

- In terms of race, 50 percent of all CIP students were Black or African American, compared to slightly less than half of focus group participants (44 percent) and 47 percent of survey takers. Numbers were similar for those identifying as Latine or Hispanic (17 percent of CIP students, 15 percent of focus group participants, and 23 percent of survey takers), and white (26 percent, 24 percent, and 18 percent, respectively).

- With respect to age, 54 percent of all CIP students were 18-39 years old, and focus group participants skewed slightly younger (68 percent of focus group participants were in the same age range), while survey takers skewed slightly older (43 percent of survey takers were in the same age range).

- The gender distribution was similar overall: 82 percent of CIP students overall were male, and there was slightly more male representation among focus group participants (86 percent) and survey takers (87 percent).

- The distribution of the seven Providers was also similar for focus group participants, survey takers, and all CIP students.

- Less than half of CIP students overall were relatively new to college in prison, with only 43 percent having been enrolled three years or fewer, whereas most focus group participants (84 percent) and survey takers (65 percent) were newer to college in prison (three years or fewer).

Table A4-2 describes estimated time to release for CIP students overall, as well as student survey takers and focus group participants:

- Looking at administrative data for CIP students enrolled in Spring 2022 semester, CIP students were notably close to release, with 44 percent to be released within 1.5 years, 56 percent within 1.5 to 5.5 years, and less than 1 percent in over 5.5 years. Comparatively, more than half of focus group participants (52 percent) reported that they expected to be released within 1.5 years, 38 percent between 1.5 and 5.5 years, and 10 percent more than 5.5 years. Additionally, survey takers reported that they were relatively close to

their time of release, with 30 percent to be released within 1.5 years, 48 percent between 1.5 and 5.5 years from time of release, and an additional 17 percent reporting that they were more than 5.5 years from their time of release. As these data are self-reported, it is important to note that many incarcerated people do not serve their full sentence, and students may not be including the Limited Credit Time Allowances (LCTA) benefit, a DOCCS policy that awards people sentenced on certain eligible offenses. Therefore, the self-reported estimated time to release may not reflect the most likely time of release.

Table A4-3 describes focus group participants' correctional history.

- With regard to number of prior incarcerations, most focus group participants had never been incarcerated before. Over two-thirds of participants (68 percent) were serving their first prison sentence and an additional 21 percent had one prior prison stay.

- In terms of sentence length, focus group participants reported an average sentence length of 12.7 years and had served nine years on average of their current sentence. Again, it is important to note that many incarcerated people do not serve their full sentence, so the time remaining on the original sentence (in this case, between three and four years on average) may not reflect the most likely time of release.

TABLE A4-1. KEY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT SURVEY TAKERS (SELF-REPORTED), FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS (SELF-REPORTED), AND CIP STUDENTS OVERALL (USING ADMINISTRATIVE DATA)[168]

	Survey Takers (N=114)		Focus Group Participants (N=101)		All CIP Students (N=931)	
Race[1]	n	% of Total	n	% of Total	n	% of Total
Black/African American	53	47%	41	44%	468	51%
White	20	18%	22	24%	243	26%
Asian	2	2%	2	2%	10	1%
Native American	5	4%	-	-	-	-
Multi-racial	15	13%	7	8%	43	5%
Other	17	15%	21	23%	161	17%
Not reported	2	-	8	-	6	-
Ethnicity	n	% of Total	n	% of Total	n	% of Total
Latine or Hispanic	23	23%	14	15%	161	17%
Not Latine or Hispanic	78	77%	79	85%	764	83%
Not reported	13	-	8	-	6	-
Age	n	% of Total	n	% of Total	n	% of Total
18-29	12	11%	27	28%	108	12%
30-39	36	32%	38	40%	388	42%
40-49	52	46%	23	24%	270	29%
50-59	11	10%	5	5%	130	14%
60+	2	2%	2	2%	35	4%
Not reported	1	-	6	-	-	-

Gender	n	% of Total	n	% of Total	n	% of Total
Male	99	88%	87	86%	759	82%
Female	12	11%	14	14%	171	18%
Another Gender	1	1%	-	-	1	0.1%
Not reported	2	-	-	-	-	-
Education Provider	n	% of Total	n	% of Total	n	% of Total
Bard	30	26%	18	18%	213	23%
Cornell	11	10%	11	11%	108	12%
Medaille	12	11%	14	14%	139	15%
Mercy	22	19%	10	10%	89	10%
MVCC	14	12%	14	14%	59	6%
NYU	15	13%	17	17%	186	20%
SUNY Jefferson	10	9%	17	17%	137	15%
Years Enrolled in College in Prison[2]	n	% of Total	n	% of Total	n	% of Total
Less than 1 year	31	28%	35	35%	105	11%
1-2 years	18	16%	25	25%	26	3%
2-3 years	23	21%	24	24%	266	29%
4-5 years	15	13%	3	3%	227	24%
5 or more years	9	8%		9%	126	14%
Not reported	2	-	-	-	-	-

1. In the case level data, the race/ethnicity categories are as follows: White, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Other, while survey takers and focus group participants were asked their race separately from ethnicity. Focus group participants and all CIP students who indicated their race as "Hispanic/Latino" are noted as "Other" for the purposes of the Race category in this table. In the case-level data, "Other" typically includes those who identify as two or more races. Therefore, in this table, multi-racial reflects the 43 students labeled as Other in the case-level data. If a student indicated that they are Hispanic/Latino and something else, they were included in the Hispanic/Latino category per the data specification guide given to Providers. Because Latine/Hispanic ethnicity is reported separately in this table, the 161 CIP students to date in the "Other" race category represent the 161 Hispanic/Latino students.

2. Years Enrolled in Prison was calculated using difference between date of enrollment and last day of Spring 2022 semester (05/31/2022). The distribution for survey takers and focus group participants is not representative of all CIP students overall, who have on average longer participation in college in prison, because this includes all CIP students, including those who have completed the program, not just current students.

TABLE A4-2. ESTIMATED TIME TO RELEASE OF STUDENT SURVEY TAKERS (SELF-REPORTED), FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS (SEL

Estimated Time to Release[1]	Survey Takers (N=114)		Focus Group Participants (N=101)		CIP Students Spring 2022 (N=156)	
	n	% of Total	n	% of Total	n	% of Total
Released during the semester	-	-	-	-	3	2%
0-2.99 months	2	2%	11	12%	13	8%
3-5.99 months	0	0%	5	5%	8	5%
6 months-1.49 years	32	30%	23	25%	45	29%
1.5-2.49 years	19	18%	19	21%	31	20%
2.5-3.49 years	20	19%	10	11%	39	25%
3.5-4.49	10	9%	8	9%	15	10%
4.5-5.49 years	5	5%	6	7%	1	0.6%
5.5+ years	18	17%	9	10%	0	0%
Not reported	8	-	10	-	1	-

1. For Estimated Time to Release, values for "CIP Students Spring 2022" reflect the estimated time to release at the end of the Spring 2022 semester for the students enrolled in that semester (N=156). Survey takers' values reflect the estimated time to release at time of the survey. Additionally, "Released during semester" is not applicable to survey takers or focus group participants.

TABLE A4-3. KEY CORRECTIONAL HISTORY CHARACTERISTICS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS (SELF-REPORTED)

	Focus Group Participants (N=101)	
Number of Times Previously Incarcerated in Prison	**n**	**% of Total**
No prior prison stays	69	68%
1 prior prison stay	21	21%
2 prior prison stays	7	7%
3 prior prison stays	1	1%
4 or more prior prison stays	3	3%
Sentence Length[1]	**Years**	**SD**
Length of prison sentence	12.7	8.9
Time served on sentence (during current prison stay)	9.0	7.1

1. Note that many incarcerated people do not serve their full sentence, so sentence length is often greater than the sum of time served on sentence and time to expected release. Accordingly, many students' actual ERDs would be lower than the simple difference between their sentence length and time served to date.

Appendix 5. Education Provider Administrative Data Variables

- Project ID
- Race
    - White
    - Black
    - Hispanic/Latino/a
    - Asian
    - Multiracial
    - Other
- Gender
    - Male
    - Female
    - Another gender
- Birth year
- County/Region of Commitment
    - Bronx
    - Brooklyn
    - Queens
    - Manhattan
    - Staten Island
    - Long Island
    - Hudson Valley Region
    - Central New York Region
    - Western New York Region
    - Outside of New York
    - Other (e.g., homeless)
- Degree program
    - A.A. in Liberal Arts
    - B.A. in Literature & Humanities
    - B.A. in Mathematics
    - B.A. in Social Studies
    - Public Health Specialization
    - A.A. in Individual Studies
    - A.S. in Human Services
    - A.S. in Liberal Studies
    - A.A. in Liberal Arts and Sciences
    - B.S. in Behavioral Science
    - A.A.S in Business Administration
    - A.S. in General Studies
    - Certificate in Small Business Management
    - A.A. in Liberal Studies
    - Other
- DOCCS facility
    - Taconic
    - Coxsackie
    - Eastern
    - Fishkill
    - Green Haven
    - Woodbourne
    - Cayuga
    - Auburn
    - Elmira
    - Five Points
    - Albion
    - Sing Sing
    - Marcy
    - Wallkill
    - Cape Vincent
    - Gouverneur
    - Watertown
- Highest education at time of enrollment
    - Less than high school
    - Some high school
    - High school diploma only
    - GED/High School Equivalency only
    - Some college in prison
    - Some college in community
    - College degree
- Earliest scheduled release date (ERD) at time of enrollment
- ERD at end of [X] semester
- Date of current college program initial enrollment
- Date of initial enrollment in specific degree program

- Courses offered, by semester
- [X] semester GPA
- Cumulative GPA
- Number of credits earned in [X] semester
- Number of credits earned to date
- Number of credits required for program
- Number of credits required to complete program
- Date of program exit
- Program exit reason
  - Transfer to other facility
  - Disciplinary reasons
  - Released to community
  - Voluntarily dropped out of program
  - Poor academic performance
  - Required to participate in mandatory DOCCS programming that precludes educational program participation
  - Completed program
  - Other
  - NA – Still enrolled in program
- Date of degree completion
- Program completion at time of release to community
  - Completed program by release date
  - Did not complete program by release date
  - NA – Not yet released
- Post-Release Academic Reentry Plan
  - Have a plan for provision of academic services upon release
  - Do not have a plan for provision of academic services upon release
  - Academic Reentry Plan/Approach not yet in place/Working with Education Coordinator to establish Academic Reentry Plan/Approach
  - NA – Not yet released
- Six-Month Post-Release Program Enrollment
  - Enrolled in program at same academic institution post-release and currently enrolled
- Enrolled in program at different academic institution post-release and currently enrolled
- Not currently enrolled in any program post-release
- Completed program prior to release
- NA – Not yet released
- Released but not yet passed 6-month post-release
- Program completion at 6-Month Follow-Up
  - Completed program by 6 months post-release
  - Did not complete program by 6 months post-release
  - Completed program prior to release
  - NA – Not yet released
  - Released but not yet passed 6-month post-release
- Twelve-Month Post-Release Program Enrollment
  - Enrolled in program at same academic institution post-release and currently enrolled
  - Enrolled in program at different academic institution post-release and currently enrolled
  - Not currently enrolled in any program post-release
  - Completed program prior to release
  - NA – Not yet released
  - Released but not yet passed 12-month post-release
  - Program Completion at 12-Month Follow-Up
  - Completed program by 12 months post-release
  - Did not complete program by 12 months post-release
  - Completed program prior to release
  - NA – Not yet released
  - Released but not yet passed 12-month post-release

Appendix 6. Summary of Course Offerings

TABLE A6-1. SUMMARY OF COURSE OFFERINGS

Discipline	Total Number of Courses, by Level						Total number of unique Education Providers offering any course within discipline/subtopic
	90	100	200	300	400	Total	
Art, Music, & Physical Education	0	17	5	1	0	21	6
Dance	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Drawing	0	4	1	0	0	5	3
Film	0	1	2	0	0	3	2
Music	0	7	0	0	0	7	3
Physical Education	0	3	0	0	0	3	2
Other	0	2	2	0	0	4	2
Humanities	0	27	20	10	0	57	7
Art History	0	3	5	2	0	10	3
History	0	22	14	7	0	43	7
Religious Studies	0	2	1	1	0	4	2

Social Science	0	66	95	35	3	200	7
Anthropology	O	5	3	5	O	13	3
Criminal Justice	O	3	2	O	O	5	2
Economics	O	15	15	O	O	20	4
Education	O	1	O	1	1*	3	1
Environmental & Urban Studies	O	1	4	O	O	5	1
Human Services	O	1	O	O	O	1	1
Interdisciplinary Studies	O	5	2	2	O	9	4
Media & Culture	O	1	2	O	O	3	1
Philosophy	O	14	10	3	O	27	5
Political Science	O	7	26	13	2	37	7
Psychology	O	6	26	13	2	47	7
Sociology	O	6	14	2	O	22	7
Other	O	1	1	5	1	8	3

Language & Literature	**0**	**59**	**60**	**13**	**2**	**134**	**7**
Literature	0	23	41	10	2	76	5
Foreign Language	0	6	3	3	0	12	3
Writing Mechanics	0	27	16	0	0	43	7
Other	0	3	0	0	0	3	2
Science, Technology & Mathematics	**2**	**52**	**20**	**7**	**3**	**84**	**7**
Biology	0	11	9	1	1	22	5
Computer Science	0	11	2	0	0	13	3
Environmental Science	0	4	1	0	0	5	3
Mathematics	2	22	7	5	2	38	7
Physics	0	3	0	0	0	3	2
Other	0	1	1	1	0	3	2
Total Number of Courses Offered:						**498**	

*Note: This education course was offered at the graduate level but is listed as a 400-level course for parsimony in this table.

Appendix 7: Education and Employment Characteristics of Student Focus Group Participants and Student Survey Takers

Tables A7-1 through A7-4 describe self-reported information about CIP students' educational and employment experiences and aspirations gleaned from survey takers and focus group participants.

Table A7-1 describes survey takers' history with college instruction. About two in five survey takers (41 percent) had prior experience with a college program, either while incarcerated or in the community. Of those who had previously been enrolled in college, 31 percent applied transfer credits towards their current degree path and 69 percent did not. Most survey takers (94 percent) expected to complete the degree they are currently working towards prior to their release.

Table A7-2 describes survey takers' re-enrollment plans. The vast majority (96 percent) planned to re-enroll in college after release from prison.

Table A7-3 presents survey takers' concerns about potential obstacles to reenrollment in college after release. When asked about specific potential obstacles (i.e., transportation, cost of books and tuition, family responsibilities, work, substance use, and housing) responses varied notably by the type of obstacle. For example, 95 percent of survey takers said that substance or alcohol use was not at all an obstacle, while close to half of survey respondents noted the cost of tuition (52 percent) and needing to work to financially support themselves or their family (48 percent) as major obstacles.

Respondents also provided additional detail in an open-ended question. The main obstacles students discussed were the financial realities of life after prison and conflicting responsibilities of employment, school, family, and parole requirements. Students, especially those who had been incarcerated for many years or even decades, also described concern about readjusting to life outside prison, including challenges with technology. The following are illustrative quotes from responses about potential obstacles to reenrollment in college, some of which touch on reentry in general:

> "A main obstacle is being able to fully focus on my studies when I reenter society mainly because the fact of having to find and keep employment and just trying to rebuild my life after being incarcerated for so long."

> "One of the obstacles I think I may experience is immediate housing and employment."

> "The only obstacle I may experience is having the finances to live and complete college. I cannot [know the] possible obstacles for my reentry/reenrollment, other than managing my time between work and spending time with my family."

Table A7-4 describes pre-incarceration and anticipated post-release education and employment plans for focus group participants:

- In terms of prior employment, more than two-thirds (71 percent) of focus group participants had been employed prior to incarceration (51 percent full-time, 20 percent part-time).

- The most common industries of pre-incarceration employment were hospitality/food service (14 percent) and construction (14 percent). Additionally, 16 percent of respondents had worked in multiple pre-incarceration industries and another 19 percent reporting another industry not listed (see Table A7-4 for a full list of included industries).

- When asked the industry in which they would be interested in working post-release, the most common responses were human services (10 percent) and counseling (7 percent), and education (6 percent). Approximately one-third (33 percent) of participants reported interest in multiple industries (11 percent) or another industry not listed (22 percent). About one-tenth of respondents were unsure of their post-release employment plans (11 percent).

- In terms of reenrollment in college education, most surveyed students planned to continue their education once released (90 percent).

- Post-incarceration, few students expressed a desire to return to industries they had worked in prior to incarceration: less than 5 percent indicated an interest in construction work, 0 percent for hospitality/food service jobs, and 1 percent for transportation. Rather, collectively, 22 percent indicated an interest in going into social work (3 percent), counseling (7 percent), healthcare (2 percent) or human services (10 percent) fields.

TABLE 7-1. KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY TAKERS (SELF-REPORTED)

	Survey Takers (N=114)	
Do you intend to complete your degree program prior to release?	**n**	**% of Total**
Yes	104	94%
No	7	6%
Not reported	3	-
Were you ever enrolled in a college degree program before this one, and if so, what type?	**n**	**% of Total**
No	67	59%
Yes; while incarcerated through correspondence	4	4%

Yes, while incarcerated in-person	14	12%
Yes, while in community before incarceration	29	25%
	Previously Enrolled (n=47)	
If previously enrolled, did you apply transfer credits?	**n**	**% of Total**
Yes	14	31%
No	31	69%
Not reported	2	-

TABLE A7-2. REENROLLMENT PLANS[169]

	Survey Takers (N=114)	
Do you plan on re-enrolling in college after your release?	**n**	**% of Total**
Yes	106	96%
No	4	4%
Not reported	4	-

TABLE A7-3. POSSIBLE OBSTACLES TO REENROLLING[170]

	Survey Takers (N=114)			
Possible obstacles to re-enrolling include…	**% Not at all an obstacle**	**% A minor obstacle**	**% Somewhat of an obstacle**	**% A major obstacle**
Cost of tuition/credits (N=112)	9%	10%	29%	52%
Needing to work to support myself or my family financially (N=111)	17%	13%	24%	46%
Cost of books/supplies (N=113)	13%	17%	36%	34%

Finding housing (N=113)	42%	14%	20%	23%
Access to transportation (N=112)	37%	24%	24%	15%
Family responsibilities (for example, childcare) (N=110)	48%	23%	16%	13%
Substance or alcohol use (N=112)	95%	1%	1%	4%

TABLE A7-4. PRE/POST-RELEASE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

	Focus Group Participants (N=101)	
Employment Status Prior to Incarceration	**n**	**% of Total**
Employed full-time	48	51%
Employed part-time	19	20%
Not employed	28	29%
Not reported	6	-
	Formerly Employed Focus Group Participants (N=76)	
Prior Employment Industry (among those employed; N=76)	**n**	**% of Total**
Agriculture	1	1%
Construction	10	14%
Education	1	1%
Health Care	2	3%
Hospitlaity/Food Service	10	14%
Manufacturing	4	6%
Office and/or Administrative Support	5	7%

	n	% of Total
Retail/Sales	5	7%
Transportation	7	10%
Multiple Industries	11	16%
Other	13	19%
Not reported	1	-
	Focus Group Participants (N=101)	
Post-Release Employment Industry of Interest[1]	**n**	**% of Total**
Agriculture	0	0%
Construction	5	5%
Counseling	7	7%
Education	6	6%
Health Care	2	2%
Hospitality/Food Service	0	0%
Human Services	9	10%
Legal	3	3%
Manufacturing	3	3%
Office and/or Administrative Support	5	5%
Retail/Sales	3	3%
Social Work	3	3%
Tech/Computer Science	4	4%
Transportation	1	1%

	n	% of Total
Multiple Industries	10	11%
Other (i.e., Business, Engineering, Fashion, Journalism, Legal Services, Politics, Publishing, Real Estate, Sanitation)	20	22%
Undecided	10	11%
Not reported	10	-
Post-Release Educational Reenrollment Plans	**n**	**% of Total**
Expects to finish degree before released	8	8%
Does not expect to finish before release and does not plan to continue	2	2%
Plans to reenroll and complete associate degree	18	18%
Plans to reenroll and complete bachelor degree	39	39%
Plans to reenroll (other or unspecified)	34	34%

1. Note that "Post-Release Employment Industry of Interest" was an open-ended question, in contrast to all other items. Thus, the response categories are not identical to those of "Prior Employment Industry."

Appendix 8: CIP Experiences of Student Survey Takers (self-reported)

Tables A8-1 through A8-3 describe students' reflections on their experience with CIP, self-reported from the student survey. Table A8-1 presents survey takers' self-reported feelings about the benefits of college.

- Among the potential benefits the survey questions asked about, survey takers felt most strongly that attending college has made their families proud (93 percent agree or strongly agree)

- 96 percent of survey takers agreed or strongly agreed that they believed college would prevent them from returning to prison.

- Nine out of 10 survey takers (91 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that college had given them a sense of pride in themselves.

- Fewer respondents, but still a large majority, agreed or strongly agreed that college will help them to support themselves financially (83 percent) or find a job more easily (81 percent) after release.

- Translating all five items in this section into a composite score, most survey takers believed that CIP benefits their lives (88 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

Table A8-2 describes survey takers' self-reported reflections on the quality of their college experience.

- Survey takers ranked technology quality the lowest: 35 percent of students did not feel that the technology they had access to for the college program met their needs.

- While students overwhelmingly agreed (79 percent) that they felt prepared for the level of instruction in their courses, the support was soft—only 26 percent strongly agreed while the other 53 percent agreed (not strongly).

- Survey takers responded most positively to the question about their instructors: 96 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their instructors have supported them in understanding and completing coursework.

- Students also responded positively about their peers, with 86 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that attending class with their peers has been helpful for their learning.

- Furthermore, most respondents (82 percent) reported that college provided them with tools and supports that would help them after release from prison.

- Over two-thirds of survey takers (68 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that available course options were relevant to their degree or certification.

- Overall, survey takers had positive reflections about their college experience, with three-quarters (75 percent) answering affirmatively across the positively-framed statements in this section.

Table A8-3 presents survey takers' feelings of satisfaction with their college-in-prison program. Most respondents (83 percent) reported being extremely satisfied or very satisfied with their program. Survey takers elaborated on program satisfaction in an open-ended question. Overwhelmingly, students described education as a "life changing process" and described how their minds and goals are forever changed due to the college experience, and were appreciative that they were treated with respect by the professors.

However, several students described frustrations with DOCCS employees who expressed discontent with the fact that college was available to the students. Additionally, students noted limitations of the programs, including resources (e.g., library access, technology) and wished that the program provided more courses, or more specialized courses, in areas of student interest for future employment. Nonetheless, despite the limitations, student respondents described feeling grateful for the opportunity to learn and described it as transformative. The following are illustrative quotes from responses about program satisfaction, describing:

1. Curriculum and coursework needs:

    - "If I go back to school for Healthcare, this basic college will not work. But I will be happy for having a degree overall... to show my children they can do it too."

    - "Curriculum can do more to prepare students to create and find answers for future financial needs."

2. Challenges with DOCCS:

    - "There must be pro-college administrative personnel in position in order for all of the college-specified needs to be met. There should not be anything connected with the college area that disrupts a student's academic progression. Also, every student needs to have access to a computer to type assignments and the ability to research interconnecting materials for classroom assignments."

    - "I wish the college could do more to protect the academic space we share and the autonomy that is needed for creativity. School requires autonomy that is not typical of prison settings. Moreover, there is a culture of harm that constitutes the motives of the officers who work the school area. It feels like an undermining force aimed at dissuading student to strive. A lot of staff here do not like the college programs. College is an affront to them. However, the same opportunities are available to them. They just choose not to utilize them. The state offers all sorts of training programs that the staff don't take advantage of. So, when they see poor black/brown incarcerated people striving, it offends them. The carceral setting is not easy for either side--but what the college should do is broker better trained staff who are more amicable and less antagonistic. There needs to be a survey that evaluates the performance of the personnel who work/supervise the school area. If you care about my education but don't care about the conditions I face with the staff, you are a hypocrite."

3. Being treated with respect by CIP Instructors and Education Coordinators:

   - "I had no expectations going into this program, I just needed something to do. However, the teachers and the coordinator have made it an incredible experience. I've been treated with nothing except respect and for that I will be forever grateful. It is humbling to be treated as such."

   - "It's exciting that even though I am incarcerated, I'm still treated like a human being by the teachers."

4. Creating a positive mindset:

   - "This program keeps me sane!"

   - "Experiencing college offsets a negative mindset and fill[s] your mind with hope and possibility, and that's extremely satisfying."

   - "Being in the college program has improved my way of thinking. Most importantly, a group of like-minded people discussing topics of classes is fulfilling."

5. College education as a life changing process:

   - "[The college program] gave me life again and one thing for sure, a future to look forward to."

   - "This has been a huge life changing process. I will forever be grateful for education." "College has opened my eyes to things I had never seen. Critical thinking has helped me in my everyday life. I am no longer thinking as a kid, I have bigger, greater goals that I want to accomplish."

TABLE A8-1. POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF COLLEGE

Being in college...	Survey Takers (N=114)				
	% Strongly disagree	% Disagree	% Neither agree nor disagree	% Agree	% Strongly agree
Will help me find a job more easily (N=113)	1%	1%	18%	26%	55%
Will help me better support myself financially	1%	2%	15%	29%	54%
Has given me a sense of pride in myself	2%	0%	7%	25%	66%
Has made my family proud of me (N=112)	2%	0%	4%	21%	73%
Will help keep me from going back to prison	1%	1%	9%	18%	72%
Weighted Benefits Composite Index[1]	1%	1%	10%	24%	64%

1. Composite indices show the percentages of each of the response options across all questions in the section divided by the total number of responses multiplied by the number of questions, which in this case is five. Cronbach's alpha is 0.884.

TABLE A8-2. REFLECTIONS ON EXPERIENCE IN THE COLLEGE-IN-PRISON PROGRAM

Reflections	Survey Takers (N=114)				
	% Strongly disagree	% Disagree	% Neither agree nor disagree	% Agree	% Strongly agree
I feel prepared for the level of instruction in my program (N=112)	0%	2%	20%	53%	26%
My instructor(s) has supported me in understanding and completing coursework	0%	1%	3%	41%	55%

Attending class with my peers has been helpful for my learning	1%	2%	11%	38%	48%
My options for coursework have been relevant for my chosen degree/certification.	2%	6%	24%	36%	32%
The technology that I have access to for the college program meets my needs. (N=113)	15%	20%	24%	21%	19%
My college program has provided me with tools/supports that will help me prepare for release and reentry.	4%	1%	14%	37%	45%
Weighted Positive Reflections Composite Index[1]	4%	5%	16%	38%	38%

1. Composite indices show the percentages of each of the response options across all questions in the section divided by the total number of responses multiplied by the number of questions, which in this case is six. Cronbach's alpha is 0.818.

TABLE A8-3. PROGRAM SATISFACTION

How satisfied are you with the program overall?	Survey Takers (N=114)	
	n	% of Total
Extremely satisfied	44	39%
Very satisfied	49	44%
Somewhat satisfied	16	14%
Not so satisfied	3	3%
Not at all satisfied	0	0%
Not reported	3	-

Appendix 9. Example General Education Curriculum Map

Instructions: Please review your academic program and map your course requirements to the MSCHE General Education Standards in Column A. If there are multiple courses that fulfill an individual standard, please add an additional row.

Campus Name	
Academic Program Name	Individual Studies, A.A

Middle States Commission on Higher Education: General Education Standards	Course(s) that fulfill the Middle States General Education Standards					If the course meets a general education requirement on your campus, please enter the name of your local campus general education requirement below.
	Course 1 (Enter additional courses in separate columns)					
	Discipline	Number	Title	Number of Credits	Learning Outcomes (if applicable)	
Written and Oral Communication	English	101	Composition	3		Basic Communication
Quantitative Reasoning	Math	155	College Algebra	3		Quantitative Reasoning
Critical Analysis and Reasoning						
Information Literacy	CLS	101	College Critical Reading			Information Management
Scientific Reasoning	Natural Science	105	Biology			Natural Sciences

Diverse Perspectives	Psychology	133	Introduction to Psychology	3		Social Science
Global Awareness	Geography	101	Introduction to World Geography	3		Other World
Cultural Sensitivity	Sociology	144	Introduction to Sociology	3		Social Sciences
Values and Ethics	Philosophy	101	Introduction to Philosophy	3		Western History

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24. New York Civil Liberties Union. (n.d.). *Stop and Frisk Data.* Retrieved March 22, 2023 from: https://www.nyclu.org/en/stop-and-Frisk-data. A federal judge also concluded that the program operated with discriminatory intent. See Floyd v. City of New York, 959 F. Supp. 2d 540, 661 (S.D.N.Y. 2013).

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55. For more information on the implications of the reinstatement of Pell Grant eligibility and the Tuition Assistance Program for incarcerated students, refer to CUNY ISLG's policy brief, *A Smart Investment for New York: Lessons Learned & Recommendations For Expansion.* https://islg.cuny.edu/resources/nys-college-in-prison-reentry-initiative.

56. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity at John Jay College of Criminal Justice was the "Prisoner Reentry Institute" prior to April 2020.

57. College Programs. (n.d.) Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. https://doccs.ny.gov/college-programs.

58. This report follows a series of publications that highlighted key findings from CIP. Please see https://islg.cuny.edu/blog/cip-goals-and-achievements and https://islg.cuny.edu/blog/cip-lessons-learned for more information

59. All research activities were approved by the CUNY IRB; DOCCS Division of Program Planning, Research and Evaluation; DOCCS Program Services Unit and Academic Education Unit; and Education Providers. See https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-jails-jobs-new-initiative-improve-re-entry-workforce-and-reduce for more.

60. Enrollment capacity fluctuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related pauses in college-in-prison instruction. In 2019, enrollment was at 1,513 students but dropped precipitously in 2020 to 1,233 students due to the pandemic. With 1,493 students in 2022, enrollment nearly matched its highest levels, pre-pandemic, during CIP.

61. Watertown Correctional Facility ceased operating in March 2021. CIP Programming continued at the remaining 16 facilities.

62. As of May 2022 Medaille College was renamed "Medaille University." Likewise, in August 2023, Mercy College was renamed "Mercy University." This report uses "Medaille College" and "Mercy College" throughout to refer to these institutions, as these name changes followed the conclusion of CIP.

63. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity at John Jay College for Criminal Justice was known as the "Prisoner Reentry Institute" prior to April 2020.

64. This report follows a series of publications that highlighted key findings from CIP. Please see https://islg.cuny.edu/blog/cip-goals-and-achievements and https://islg.cuny.edu/blog/cip-lessons-learned for more information

65. As mentioned elsewhere, the reduction in facilities reflects closures across New York State. Please refer to *Figure 1*.

66. All research activities were approved by the CUNY IRB; DOCCS Division of Program Planning, Research and Evaluation; DOCCS Program Services Unit and Academic Education Unit; and Education Providers.

67. Each Provider had contractual targets for semesterly enrollment, but did not have a cumulative target of unique students over the course of the Initiative.

68. New York Consortium for Higher Education in Prison. (n.d.) *College Programs in NYS*. Retrieved from http://nychep.org/college-programs-in-nys/

69. This figure was as high as 1,513 in 2019, although enrollment substantially declined during the onset COVID-19 pandemic and in the semesters thereafter. Figures indicate that enrollment is resuming pre-pandemic levels, as the initial dip in 2020 (1,233 students) is now back at 1,493 as of November 2022.

70. This report uses "ERD" to refer to earliest scheduled release date throughout this report.

71. DOCCS did not establish eligibility criteria for this Initiative, but did help determine which individuals were eligible according to the criteria established by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office.

72. When an individual is received by DOCCS, the Inmate Records Coordinator (IRC) at each DOCCS correctional facility is responsible for sentence time calculations. The IRC determines their earliest possible release date, merit and conditional release dates, if applicable, and maximum expiration of their sentence.

73. Most Providers reported some level of difficulty applying CIP eligibility criteria. Many were confused about how to use a student's ERD as an eligibility criterion, or at which point the criterion applied. Several Providers also reported difficulties accurately estimating students' ERDs due to conflicting or outdated sources of information, and because ERD's are subject to change. For the purposes of this evaluation, all students reported to CUNY ISLG, regardless of whether they were eligible for CIP or not, are included in the analyses presented in this report.

74. For instance, a few Providers applied the criterion to the point at which students were placed on a program waitlist, rather than time of enrollment in the program; for programs with existing students, some applied the criterion to enrollment in the most recent semester, rather than enrollment into the program itself.

75. In addition to program criteria, incarcerated people must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible to earn an LCTA benefit. They must: 1) Not be serving a sentence for murder in the first degree, for any offense defined in Article 130 of the Penal Law, or an attempt or conspiracy to commit such offense; and be 2) serving an indeterminate sentence for a non-drug A-I felony offense, or serving a sentence for a violent felony offense as defined in Subdivision 1 of Penal Law 70.02, or serving a sentence for an offense defined

in Article 125 of the Penal Law. Additionally, to be eligible, an incarcerated person may not have "maintained an overall poor institutional record" or committed a "serious disciplinary infraction" during their current incarceration, may not have received a recommendation for a loss of good time sanction within the five years preceding the LCTA date, and may not have filed a claim, proceeding, or action against a State Agency Officer or employee that was found to be frivolous.

76. Students can earn LCTA via college participation by: 1) successfully completing an Associate's or Bachelor's Degree from an accredited college during one's current term of incarceration; or 2) participating in an accredited college program for two years, earning a minimum of 24 credits and participating for a minimum of four semesters.

77. This total includes those directly funded through CIP and those funded under the match requirement. All seven Providers were contractually obligated to provide match funding, whether through private funding, Pell funding, or in-kind resources, but only five of the seven Providers were contractually obligated to support match students.

78. Providers were asked to provide 1:1 funding match for all funding they receive through CIP in order to reach more students. Match funding included existing program funding (such as Pell or private funding) as well as in-kind resources. Each Provider served a specified number of CIP-funded students annually, and five of the seven Providers also served a specified number of match-funded students. The other two Providers did not serve match-funded students, and their match funding commitment consisted solely of in-kind resources (e.g., program staff and administration expenses). The eligibility requirements and educational standards that applied to CIP-funded students also applied to match-funded students. In that sense, the experiences of CIP-funded and match-funded students were similar within each program; accordingly, match-funded students were considered part of CIP and included in its evaluation. Therefore, the students served and classes offered through the CIP funding and Providers' match funding are included as the subject of this report.

79. See *Figure 1* in this report.

80. U.S. Census Bureau. (2022, December 20). *School Enrollment in the United States: October 2021 – Detailed Tables.* https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/demo/school-enrollment/2021-cps.html.

81. Notably, students of color and students from NYC were more likely to have their GED or HSE, compared to white students and students from Central and Western NY, who more often completed high school and received a diploma (p<0.001).

82. NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. (2021, January 1). *Under custody report: Profile of under custody population as of January 1, 2021.* https://doccs.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/04/under-custody-report-for-2021.pdf.

83. All figures and tables that refer to "Total DOCCS Population" (N=34,405) represent the DOCCS' total custody population as of December 31, 2020.

84. As of 2021, 50 percent of these individuals incarcerated in DOCCS facilities in NYS were Black/African American, 23 percent were white, and 24 percent were Hispanic/Latine. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from https://doccs.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/04/under-custody-report-for-2021.pdf.

85. Data source: Higher Education Reports: Admissions and Academic Preparation from the NYS Department of Education. Accessible here: http://www.nysed.gov/information-reporting-services/higher-education-reports.

86. Data in this analysis included the 126,072 enrolled students in private and public higher education institutions in New York State in Fall 2021 whose racial and ethnic classifications matched those in our existing analyses (i.e., white, Black/African American, Hispanic, and Asian) for sake of comparison. Demographics from the full NYSED dataset that were excluded from the analysis were: nonresident alien; non-Hispanic two or more races; American Indian/Alaskan Native; and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

87. In total, there are three female-only facilities in New York State; two of these facilities are medium security and one is a maximum-security facility.

88. For more information on the distribution of facilities participating in CIP, please see https://islg.cuny.edu/resources/nys-college-in-prison-re-entry-initiative.

89. The distribution of violent and nonviolent felony offenses could be a reflection of the distribution of CIP students in medium security facilities compared to maximum. As previously discussed, CIP sites had a higher proportion of medium facilities, which are more likely than maximum to house nonviolent offenders and tend to carry less severe sentences. This is, however, specific to CIP, and is not representative of the larger incarcerated student population.

90. Data source: New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. Retrieved August 23, 2023

91. Data source: New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. Retrieved August 1, 2023.

92. New York State Unified Court System (2019). Types of criminal cases. Accessed July 13, 2023, from https://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/criminal/typesCriminalCases.shtml.

93. Common examples include second degree murder (Class A1); first degree robbery (Class B); second degree criminal possession of a weapon (Class C); third degree burglary (Class D); and fourth degree grand larceny (Class E) (see *Figure 8*).

94. The regions displayed in *Figure 10*: Percentage of CIP Students, by Region were defined using existing classifications as represented by DOCCS facility maps and reports.

95. As of 2021, 33,090 individuals were incarcerated in New York State. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from https://doccs.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/04/under-custody-report-for-2021.pdf.

96. Watertown, one of the 17 CIP facility sites, closed in 2021.

97. This total of 498 courses counts equivalent courses across Providers only once. In other words, "English 101" and "Introduction to English" are equivalent courses at different institutions, and only counted once in the total. In addition, Providers offered some courses multiple times. Thus, 498 is a very conservative reflection of the volume of courses offered.

98. N=925; p<0.001

99. N=925; p<0.001

100. N=925; p<0.001

101. N=924, rather than 931, as 7 students are missing data with respect to exit status reason; p<0.001

102. N=924, rather than 931, as 7 students are missing data with respect to exit status reason.

103. Students from NYC had an average of 2.44 fewer prior college credits when first enrolling in CIP when compared to students from Central and Western New York. N=750; p<0.05. A similar analysis for students enrolled in BA/BS programs did not find statistically significant regional differences in credits earned prior to enrollment in CIP.

104. N=814; p<0.001.

105. New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Division of Ministerial, Family and Volunteer Services. (2022, December). *Standards of conduct for volunteers within the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.* https://doccs.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/12/4750c.pdf.

106. In March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DOCCS barred volunteers from entering correctional facilities as part of lockdown measures intended to stop the spread of COVID-19. Spring 2020 CIP courses subsequently continued remotely, carrying on this way into the Summer and Fall of 2020 for some programs. Remote coursework includes both asynchronous correspondence courses through the mail, and synchronous virtual video conferencing where-in professors were not physically in the facility but the students received instruction together in the in the facility classroom.

107. JPay is a platform on which incarcerated people can pay a fee to send and receive emails, and their loved ones can send money to them in prison. During the pandemic, several CIP students noted that the cost to stay connected was especially burdensome during the pandemic when in-person visits were prohibited. *NYS DOCCS Inmate Services.* (n.d.) JPay. Retrieved March 15, 2023 from https://www.jpay.com/Agency-Details/NYS-DOCCS-Inmate-Services.aspx.

108. Education Supervisors oversee the daily operation of a given facility's education program. College programs are typically included in this position's official responsibilities, though college programming is only one of many education programs that the Education Supervisor oversees.

109. While students and Providers noted the potential benefits of having students live in the same unit for ease of collaboration, multiple stakeholders noted the benefits of interactions between students in the facility and their non-student peers. Several students in focus groups described learning about the CIP program from other students that they interacted with in the facility who encouraged them to sign up. Additionally, students and Providers noted that participation in the CIP program may have positive influences on the incarcerated setting (e.g., a focus on studiousness, a disincentive to engage in behavior that might lead to disciplinary actions) and the benefits might extend beyond the students to non-student peers in their vicinity.

110. This process involves completing an application form; passing a background check; providing at least two references, fingerprints, and documentation of a tuberculosis (TB) screening; and attending a volunteer orientation at the facility at which programs take place.

111. DOCCS staff thoroughly review each computer lab request to ensure it complies with DOCCS policies which aim to maintain safe and secure correctional facilities.

112. JPay's Lantern is a technology-driven educational platform available at an additional cost to students. Some CIP Providers weighed the benefits and costs of platform functions and expressed concern about normalizing an impersonal approach to college education and the potential in the future for students' allocated Pell funding to go towards JPay's Lantern education and similar technology-driven educational resources in lieu of in-person instruction. As of Spring 2022 no CIP Providers used the platform.

113. To read more about their Transfer and Articulation work specific to CIP and CJII, please reference SUNY's publication on these efforts here: SUNY HEJI. (2023, March). *College-in-Prison Transfer and Articulation Work within the Criminal Justice Investment Initiative.* https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/education/prison-ed/CIP-Transfer-and-Articulation-CJII.pdf

114. These include the 2018 California Statewide Training Conference on Higher Education in Prisons, the 2018 New York State Association of Incarcerated Education Programs, the Spring 2018 New York State Consortium for Higher Education meeting, the 2018 DCJS Reentry Task Force Training, a Parole Board Training in 2018, calls with representatives from California's five-year initiative to increase access to higher education in state prisons, and the 2018 National Conference on Higher Education in Prison.

115. Further information about SUNY's curriculum mapping efforts and the transfer and articulation agreements is available on SUNY's website: "College-In-Prison Transfer and Articulation Work," The State University of New York, https://www.suny.edu/impact/education/heji/transfer-and-articulation/.

116. CUNY "Pathways" and SUNY "Transfer Paths" are established educational requirements and transfer guidelines produced for the city- and state-level public higher education institutions, respectively. CUNY Pathways, https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/; SUNY Transfer Paths, https://www.suny.edu/attend/get-started/transfer-students/suny-transfer-paths/.

117. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2020). *New York State Back To School Guide: Resource Guide:*

Reentry And College Access Organizations. https://justiceandopportunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Institute_BackToSchoolGuide_Directory_R3-v2.pdf.

118. N=833; p<0.001

119. The sample in *Figure 22* reflects students who: a) were released prior to completion and b) had data on whether or not they had an academic service plan. In contrast, the sample *Figure 23* examines reenrollment among students who were released prior to completion based on whether or not they had an academic plan, i.e., did not have missing data for reenrollment in the community.

120. These differences are provided for descriptive purposes only due to the small sample size.

121. New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS). (n.d.). Standards of conduct for volunteers within the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. Retrieved from http://www.doccs.ny.gov/Directives/4750C.pdf.

122. In addition, DOCCS Reentry Services also provides supports to returning citizens after incarceration in DOCCS facilities, including, but not limited to, mental health and substance use treatment; domestic violence and sex offender treatment; child support and family reunification; vocational, employment and educational programs; and benefits assistance.

123. Providers supplement the work of DOCCS Reentry Services, which provides community-based linkages and assistance to community supervision and facility staff in order to facilitate the reentry process for these individuals.

124. Jensen, J., & Batkin, S. (2020). *New York State Back to School Guide: Pursuing College After Incarceration.* The Institute for Justice and Opportunity at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. https://justiceandopportunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/BackToSchoolGuide_ResourceGuide_final_pages.pdf.

125. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2021). *Reflections on Building a Partnership with Corrections: A Resource Guide for College-In-Prison Programs.* https://justiceandopportunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Institute_BuildingPartnerships_F1_digital_pages.pdf.

126. Parole requirements are based on crime type and severity and are made in the interest of public safety. These requirements can include housing restrictions based on orders of protection and other matters of separation.

127. This was a key takeaway from the first Learning Exchange in 2019.

128. Identification and certificates of residence were identified as a key challenge in the 2019 Learning Exchange. Although DOCCS works to assist anyone under parole supervision with obtaining New York State identification within 120 days of release from prison, Providers still reported challenges. Some of these challenges may have been experienced by released individuals who were not under parole supervision.

129. N=139; p<0.05

130. The final report of the outcome evaluation conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice is expected to examine reenrollment more systematically.

131. N=931; p<0.001

132. During CIP, SUNY and the Institute for Justice and Opportunity created the "New York State College-in-Prison Planning Guide: An Inventory of Program Practices and Support" to aid with the program design planning, and development or strengthening of new and existing college-in-prison programs, respectively. The guide is accessible here: https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/education/prison-ed/NYS-Inventory-of-Promising-Practices-Final-9.14.21.pdf.

133. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity at John Jay College of Criminal Justice provides recommendations for Providers to create buy-in with correctional facilities in its publication, *Reflections on Building a Partnership with Corrections*, accessible here: https://justiceandopportunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Institute_BuildingPartnerships_F1_digital_pages.pdf.

134. Created during the course of CIP, SUNY's "Cultivating Relationships & Building Support: A Guide to College-in-Prison Program Sustainability" provides practical suggestions on building support and buy-in from stakeholders, accessible here: https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/education/prison-ed/HEJI-Cultivating-Relationships_July-2021_20210916.pdf.

135. According to DOCCS policy, the Department makes every attempt not to transfer students enrolled in college programs. In cases where a transfer is unavoidable, the unit that oversees transfers, Classification and Movement, contacts the Director of Education to inquire what facilities are eligible for student transfer such that students can continue college-in-prison instruction.

136. There are instances when DOCCS policies may require overriding existing holds for reasons including, but not limited to: medical transfers, security transfers, an incarcerated individual's request for transfer as well as transfers that enable an incarcerated individual's attendance in court-mandated programming when such programming is not otherwise available at the student's current facility.

137. More information about The New York Consortium for Higher Education in Prison (NY-CHEP) can be located here: www.nychep.org.

138. JSTOR's two models (the offline version with cleared material and the direct access model which has a queue of reading material that then has to be cleared) are detailed here: https://about.jstor.org/news/1-5-million-mellon-grant-to-make-jstor-accessible-to-incarcerated-students/. Overall, these JSTOR models may require less coordination on the part of corrections, libraries, and with faculty.

139. Some prison jobs are connected to housing units and students may not wish to be housed away from some of these desirable jobs. Additionally, some students may not wish to both attend class with as well as be housed with their classmates, despite the potential benefits. A few stakeholders noted that housing CIP students together would limit the possibility of interest in the program to be piqued in non-students through interactions and conversation with current students. Thus, incorporating students' and other stakeholders' views in these decisions is paramount.

140. SUNY's Prison Education Faculty Recruitment Toolkit and Training Resource Guide, created through CIP, is accessible here: https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/education/prison-ed/HEJI-Faculty-Recruitment-and-Training_Publication-11.23.20.pdf.

141. In one Learning Exchange, Providers were invited to a session facilitated by Em Daniels, a leading expert in the impacts of trauma and incarceration on adult learners and adult education inside carceral settings. Participants were provided with a copy of Em Daniels' book "Building A Trauma-responsive Educational Practice: Lessons from a Corrections Classroom" as a resource and as grounding to engage in a discussion of common issues faced in the classroom.

142. SUNY's Prison Education Faculty Recruitment Toolkit and Training Resource Guide also provides a number of recommendations with respect to creating strong student-faculty relationships within college-in-prison environments.

143. In New York State, volunteers are required to disclose to DOCCS if they are working or planning to work with formerly incarcerated individuals in the community. Case-by-case pre-approval is not necessary as long as the relationship is of professional nature. Given that Providers were expected to provide reentry services as part of CIP, they were likely to interact with some individuals on community supervision.

144. More information about the LCTA process and procedures (Directive 4792) can be found here: https://doccs.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/11/4792.pdf.

145. Jensen, J., & Batkin, S. (2020).

146. New York Public Library. (2020). *Connections 2020: A free guide for formerly incarcerated people in New York City.* https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/connections2020.pdf.

147. New York Consortium for Higher Education in Prison. (n.d.) *College Programs in NYS.* http://nychep.org/college-programs-in-nys/.

148. Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 (p. 5257). (2021). U.S. Congress. https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20201221/BILLS-116HR133SA-RCP-116-68.pdf.

149. Overall, the three major changes that will contribute to an increase in the number of eligible students are: 1) reinstatement, so that almost any college can implement a program, thus more students will likely be reached; 2) changes to the selective service requirement, and 3) students who were convicted of a drug crime while receiving aid will no longer be barred. Lastly, the Pell Grant form itself will be simplified and condensed with the goal of losing fewer prospective students to 'application attrition'.

150. Prior to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, students from prisons were ineligible to receive Pell Grant funding.

151. A High School Equivalency (HSE) test provides an alternative to those who did not graduate with their high school diploma. The General Education Development (GED) test is the most popularized test to obtain an HSE diploma.

152. All participating programs must submit annual reports to the federal Department of Education on program provision, student demographics, and student outcomes

153. NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. (n.d.). *About Us.* https://doccs.ny.gov/about-us.

154. NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. (n.d.). *The Departmental Mission.* https://doccs.ny.gov/departmental-mission..

155. Jensen, J., & Batkin, S. (2020).

156. The Institute for Justice and Opportunity at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. (2021).

157. The 17 correctional facilities are located in three of the state's seven DOCCS regions, and seven of the state's nine DOCCS Hubs. The four regions without CIP involvement are: Manhattan-Staten Island, Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens-Long Island. The two hubs without CIP involvement are: NYC and Clinton.

158. Cornell's program relies on a consortium model with Cayuga and Corning Community Colleges, whereby Cornell oversees the instruction and curriculum while Cayuga and Corning Community Colleges confer the AA degrees. Mercy's program operates with a non-profit, Hudson Link, to run the program. In this case, Hudson Link administers the program in the facility, and Mercy confers the degrees and provides the faculty instruction.

159. CIP students were required to be 1.5 to 5.5 years from their earliest scheduled release at the time of initial program enrollment. In addition, DOCCS requires that students have a high school diploma or equivalent and conducts a review of their disciplinary record. Individuals with a record of a Tier 2 offense (e.g., drug) in the past six months or a Tier 3 offense (e.g., assault) in the past 12 months, are not permitted to enroll.

160. DOCCS facility staff participated in the first round of data collection (i.e., "early implementation"), but DOCCS facility staff were not made available to CUNY ISLG for interviews in 2022 (i.e. "late implementation").

161. Interview and focus group participants' names and other identifying details are obscured in this report to maintain confidentiality.

162. Seven focus groups were conducted (one per facility) during our first round of data collection, and five focus groups were conducted in the second round.

163. Two CUNY ISLG research staff facilitated each focus group, and one or more DOCCS facility staff persons (e.g., Corrections officers) and DOCCS Central Office staff persons were typically present as well, as governed by DOCCS security protocol.

164. In total, 295 surveys were sent out across the seven facilities, distributed in numbers proportional to enrollment in those facilities, with a surplus sent to each facility to account for the possibility of discarded and backup surveys. Considering that there were 156 enrolled students in the Spring 2023 semester when the surveys

were administered, the survey take-up rate among CIP students is estimated at 73.1 percent, though this may be an overestimate because it is possible that some enrolled students did not meet all CIP eligibility criteria, even though they were enrolled in courses and programs with CIP students.

165. These classes observed included Introduction to Criminal Justice, Introduction to Anthropology, Introduction to Writing, History of American Higher Education, World Culture, English Literature I, English Literature II, Intermediate Algebra, 19th Century American History, Abnormal Psychology, and Principles of Macroeconomics.

166. CUNY ISLG did not observe a class at Wallkill in the first round of data collection due to unforeseen circumstances the day of the site visit. In the second round of data collection, CUNY ISLG was not able to conduct site visits at Marcy or Sing Sing due to heightened COVID-19 restrictions and temporary cessation of volunteer programming, including college instruction. CUNY ISLG observed classes whose students had participated in focus groups for continuity in the research.

167. Janice, A., & Voight, M. (2016). Toward Convergence: A Technical Guide for the Postsecondary Metrics Framework. Institute for Higher Education Policy.

168. Surveys were distributed and completed in Spring and early Summer 2022. Focus groups occurred during Academic Years 2018-19 and 2021-2022. The data for all CIP students to date reflects the most recent values from each Provider.

169. This question was posed to all survey takers, regardless of whether they indicated plans to finish their current degree program prior to release.

170. Individuals do not have access to substances and alcohol in prison. As such, this is likely an underestimate of potential issues that may arise with respect to the potential for substance and alcohol use upon release and reentry.

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