



SERVING STUDENTS INCARCERATED IN PRISON Guiding Principles

California Community Colleges in the Rising Scholars Network serve incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students. The Rising Scholars Advisory Committee advises the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office on policy and planning in support of the Rising Scholars Network.

The Advisory Committee believes that serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students is a critical matter of equity. Reaching and serving Rising Scholars students is within the mission of the California Community Colleges and aligns with the Vision for Success. The Advisory Committee further recognizes that students in prison are situated differently from students on campus, as incarcerated students cannot freely explore and choose amongst the options offered on campus, nor can they freely move between the 116 community colleges.

In support of the pursuit of excellence for all California Community College students, the Rising Scholars Advisory Committee adopts the following principles to guide colleges as they exercise their local control to **serve students incarcerated in prison**:

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Identify a dedicated point person or team on campus to interact with the prison and to handle issues such as lockdown, scheduling, and clearances;
- Develop strong working relationships with prison staff responsible for coordinating educational programming. Connect with prison staff on a regular basis;
- Invest in Admissions and Records staff with sufficient time and training to promptly and accurately manage enrollment, adds and drops, grades, and other paperwork, recognizing that students in prison will often lack internet access and therefore must complete all paperwork in hard copy;
- Ensure that college MIS data accurately reflects the number of incarcerated students;
- Maximize instructor face-to-face interaction with students and prioritize offering face-to-face courses in the prisons located in the district whenever possible;
- If course delivery is via distance or correspondence, ensure at a minimum regular instructor feedback, adherence to these Guiding Principles, and compliance with Title 5 regulations defining distance and correspondence;
- Develop campus procedures and guidelines to ensure that different college instructors and staff treat incarcerated students consistently, including procedures and guidelines about writing letters for the parole board and about providing materials and supplies to students;
- Develop procedures and guidelines about in-person interactions between students and college faculty or staff. Train faculty and staff about the unintended negative consequences that may fall on the student if college faculty or staff have in-person, private interactions with a student;
- Promptly provide students and prison staff with documentation needed for milestones or other prison administrative or programmatic processes;

- Respond to transcript requests including those that arrive by regular mail as quickly as possible;
- Safeguard academic freedom by ensuring that the college and college faculty determine curriculum, course content, academic progression, and course selection.

CLARIFY THE PATH

- Create a Guided Pathway to certificate or degree by offering courses that continue the students' progression toward credential each term;
- Offer Associate Degree for Transfer pathways or transferable IGETC or CSU-General Education Breadth courses in coordination with the other Rising Scholars colleges, to address the fact that students may be released or transferred to a different prison prior to degree completion;
- If leadership in CDCR's Office of Correctional Education approves offering a certificate, ensure that the certificate aligns with employment opportunities that are open for Rising Scholars students;
- Offer orientation and outreach sessions for prospective students, in-person whenever possible.

ENTER THE PATH

- Walk students through enrollment and completion of the California College Promise Grant application, in-person whenever feasible;
- Be aware of access barriers that arise when the college requires supporting documentation that incarcerated men and women cannot provide. Work with Admissions and Records and Financial Aid to ensure that incarcerated students are able to enroll and receive financial aid;
- Provide individualized academic planning and counseling for each student, in-person whenever feasible and without undue obstacles or hurdles;
- Ensure that incarcerated students have the information they need to request transcripts, including a means by which to request transcripts by regular mail as incarcerated students usually cannot make an online request.

STAY ON THE PATH

- Whenever possible, provide student advising, counseling, tutoring and other support services in-person;
- Run degree audits or equivalent on a regular basis and inform students about their progress;
- Encourage faculty to utilize Open Educational Resources to avoid charging students or their families for textbooks. Take advantage of any available funding to cover textbooks before looking to students or their families. If non-OER textbooks are required, create a textbook library or other system to re-use books;
- Recognize that incarcerated students are unable to earn an income like students in the community, which means that students' families carry a high burden to pay for telephone, toiletries, and other basic student needs. Avoid adding to the burden by waiving health, parking, and other similar campus fees for incarcerated students and not charging students for materials or supplies whenever possible;
- Enable students to make informed decisions about their education, recognizing that incarcerated students cannot freely access outside resources to educate themselves, so the college carries an additional burden to provide information to the student;

- Whenever possible, work with prison staff to identify students who are being transferred to another prison prior to degree completion. Reach out to the colleges serving the new institution. Give the student a copy of their unofficial transcript and ensure that the student knows which classes they need for degree completion. Reach out to the colleges serving the new institution for a warm hand-off and to keep the student on track to degree;
- Prepare students for success when they return home, especially if they return home prior to degree completion. Provide unofficial transcripts without charge. Ensure that students nearing release know how to continue their education. Provide college names and contact information for colleges near the student's home, and aid in supporting a warm hand-off between colleges.

ENSURE LEARNING

- Identify students as “students” rather than “offenders” or “inmates;”
- Foster students’ academic growth while holding them accountable for their own learning;
- Ensure that incarcerated students receive a high-quality education, including parity of rigor and quality with courses on campus;
- Hold students in prison to the same academic standards as on campus;
- Select instructors carefully and train all instructors whether full- or part-time to be effective and appropriate in the prison classroom and with incarcerated students;
- Train all instructors and staff on boundaries and rules in the prison environment, particularly how the student-instructor and student-staff relationship may differ from campus;
- Ensure parity of educational supports and services with campus, including library access and research support;
- Be mindful of the contained environment within a prison and the corresponding need to continuously adapt course materials and assessments;
- Work with faculty and the Academic Senate to foster a local professional development community for instructors whether full- or part-time. Consider collaborative relationships between new instructors and those with more experience teaching incarcerated students. Ensure that all instructors have access to professional development and training about effective teaching and learning for incarcerated students.