



# U.S. Department of Education Launches Second Chance Pell Pilot Program for Incarcerated Individuals

## Program will build on existing research to examine effects of restoring Pell eligibility

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As part of the Obama Administration's commitment to create a fairer, more effective criminal justice system, reduce recidivism, and combat the impact of mass incarceration on communities, the Department of Education today announced the [Second Chance Pell Pilot program](#) to test new models to allow incarcerated Americans to receive [Pell Grants](#) and pursue the postsecondary education with the goal of helping them get jobs, support their families, and turn their lives around.

High-quality correctional education — including postsecondary correctional education — has been shown to measurably reduce re-incarceration rates. By reducing recidivism, correctional education can ultimately save taxpayers money and create safer communities. According to a Department of Justice funded [2013 study from the RAND Corporation](#), incarcerated individuals who participated in correctional education were 43 percent less likely to return to prison within three years than prisoners who didn't participate in any correctional education programs. RAND estimated that for every dollar invested in correctional education programs, four to five dollars are saved on three year re-incarceration costs.

In 1994, Congress amended the Higher Education Act (HEA) to eliminate Pell Grant eligibility for students in federal and state penal institutions. The United States currently has the highest incarceration rate in the world with more than 1.5 million prisoners. The pilot being announced today will restore educational opportunity for some of those individuals, improving their chances to stay out of prison and become productive members of their communities after they are released.

"As the President recently noted, for the money we currently spend on prison we could provide universal pre-k for every 3- and 4-year-old in America or double the salary of every high school teacher in the country," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "America is a nation of second chances. Giving people who have made mistakes in their lives a chance to get back on track and become contributing members of society is fundamental to who we are – it can also be a cost-saver for taxpayers."

Through this [pilot program](#), incarcerated individuals who otherwise meet Title IV eligibility requirements and are eligible for release, particularly within the next five years, could access Pell Grants to pursue postsecondary education and training. The goal is to increase access to high-quality educational opportunities and help these individuals successfully transition out of prison and back into the classroom or the workforce. Incarcerated students who receive Pell Grants through this pilot will be subject to cost of attendance restrictions, so Pell Grants can only be used to pay for tuition, fees, books and supplies required by an individual's education program. Incarcerated individuals will not be eligible to receive other types of Federal student aid under this pilot.

The pilot program builds upon previous Administration efforts. A report from President Obama's "My Brother's Keeper Task Force" recommended enforcing the rights of incarcerated youth, including access to a quality education and eliminate unnecessary barriers to reentry. Last December, the Departments of Education and Justice released a [Correctional Education Guidance Package](#) to improve education programs in juvenile justice facilities and clarified existing rules around Pell Grant eligibility for youth housed in juvenile justice facilities and individuals held in local and county jails. The pilot program is intended to build on this guidance and expand access to high-quality postsecondary educational opportunities and support the successful reentry of adults.

The Department of Education is authorized under HEA to periodically administer experiments to test the effectiveness of statutory and regulatory flexibility for participating postsecondary institutions in disbursing federal student aid.

When determining which institutions will be selected for participation in this experiment, the Department will consider evidence that demonstrates a strong record on student outcomes and in the administration of the title IV HEA programs.

The deadline for postsecondary institutions to apply for this pilot program is Sept. 30, 2015 for the 2016-2017 academic year.

For more information, please read here: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2015-18994.pdf>

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