In order to realize this important opportunity, HEP programs must provide a quality education, be designed to meet the needs of the student population, and deliver strong outcomes.

At present however, an accurate understanding of the scope of these benefits is limited because little research has been conducted to properly identify and benchmark quality postsecondary opportunities in prisons.

The Higher Education in Prison Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Framework is designed to measure the impact your program has on students, institutions, facilities, and communities by including indicators that measure student success outcomes, academic quality, civic engagement, and soft skill development.

For this framework to be as useful as possible, we recommend that you evaluate and strengthen your partnership with the Department of Corrections and have open conversations with them about how this framework can further your respective missions. HEP can have positive effects on both colleges and correctional facilities, in addition to students and their communities. Correctional institutions already collect many of the success outcomes within this framework and HEP succeeds when leaders from both sectors set mutually determined goals, maintain consistent communication, and realize their shared vision with shared resources.

We encourage you to reach out to connections within the facility or department to discuss how their providing (or increasing) access to existing data will benefit all partners. By strengthening your relationship and ensuring your institutions are working together, you can create safer, stronger, and more equitable learning environments for students, and correctional staff as well.
By utilizing this holistic framework, you can:

- Promote equity in student success. Use this framework to compare existing campus data to your students’ experiences and ensure an equitable learning environment for students involved in the justice system.
- Regularly assess program outcomes. Use this framework throughout the administration of your program, including pre- and post-semester or quarter completion.
- Partner with institutional research (IR) offices on campus. To capture the data needed, partner with the institutional research (IR) office or office of the registrar on campus to establish protocols that align with main campus practices. This will ensure that data is captured in an equitable and comparable way for all students enrolled at the institution.
- Adapt the framework for the ever-changing landscape of HEP. The KPI framework, categories, and data sources all can be adapted for different program offerings, delivery methods, and student populations. Consistently adapting and molding the framework and assessment methods will ensure that the data remains timely, appropriate, and useable.

FOUR CATEGORIES OF DATA-BASED INSIGHTS TO INFORM CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE IMPACT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN PRISON

**Student Success**
You are most likely already collecting the information necessary to calculate these metrics, including data on credit completion, graduation, demographics, recidivism, and employment following release. These metrics can be supplemented with your students’ personal stories of success and data from the Department of Corrections and the Bureau of Justice Statistics for your region or state.

**Academic Quality**
You know that students inside should receive the same quality of instruction as their main campus peers. To ensure quality is consistent, these metrics measure the credentials and experiences of the faculty, including those teaching inside, the syllabi and materials for each course, the rigor of assignments and grading policies, and learning outcomes.

**Civic Engagement**
You share the vision of your college and university to educate students to be global citizens on campus and beyond, and you know that justice-involved students are already engaged in their communities. These metrics help you assess their level of engagement. Focus groups and interviews with students and alumni will elicit responses about students’ involvement with greater society, along with their engagement with civic problems facing our nation today. These metrics can showcase how your students contribute to improvements within the facility and beyond.

**Soft Skill Development**
You recognize how much employers and institutions value soft skills and want to measure their development. Metrics in this category do that by including questions around time management, hope, and open-mindedness – all key soft skills for personal and professional development, both inside and upon returning home.

National Momentum Builds for Expanding Higher Education in Prison

- In 2020, the Second Chance Pell (SCP) program welcomed a second cohort of 67 institutions in 34 states and the District of Columbia. Created in 2015, the original pilot included 64 higher education institutions to serve incarcerated students using Pell Grant funds. As of April 2020, these SCP sites have awarded 2,071 college certificates, 2,017 associate degrees, and 365 bachelor’s degrees.
- As part of an omnibus spending bill signed into law in late December 2020, Pell Grant eligibility was reinstated for currently incarcerated students across the country, lifting the ban that had been in place since 1994.
- While students involved in the justice system remain ineligible for more than half (54) of the largest 100 state grant aid programs, some states are re-examining their policies. In 2020, for example, New Jersey and California both passed legislation to remove these barriers to their state need-based aid programs.
CITATIONS


How can we measure the student success outcomes (e.g., retention, grades, credits) for HEP students and how they compare to their main campus counterparts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KPI</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Potential Data Source (e.g., Sample Measure)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>Twelve-month headcount that includes all undergraduate students who enroll at any point during the calendar year  • HEP enrollment reports  • HEP class rosters  *Required reporting for SCP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Completion</td>
<td>The number of credits completed within a program by an individual student  • HEP end of semester enrollment reports  • HEP student transcripts  *Required reporting for SCP</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits Attempted</td>
<td>The number of credits attempted within a program by an individual student, including all credits, even those that were not completed  • Comparison of enrollment reports from beginning and end of semester  • HEP student transcripts  *Required reporting for SCP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention Rate</td>
<td>The percentage of students in a cohort who are enrolled in the subsequent semester  • HEP enrollment reports between semesters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrections Transfer Rate</td>
<td>The percentage of students who transfer from one correctional institution to another  • Transfer reports from DOC  *If individualized reports are not available, your facility should have an average transfer rate to provide context for these outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Transfer Rate</td>
<td>The percentage of students who transfer from one higher education institution to another  • Data from the Office of the Registrar at each institution that offers HEP at the facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>The percentage of students in a cohort who earn the credential sought at their initial institution  • HEP enrollment reports  • HEP student transcripts  *Required reporting for SCP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)</td>
<td>The average value of the accumulated final grades earned in courses throughout a student's enrollment  • HEP student transcripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completers</td>
<td>The number of students who complete a credential in a given academic year  • HEP enrollment reports  • HEP student transcripts  *Required reporting for SCP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recidivism Rate</td>
<td>The percentage of program participants who are found guilty of a new crime or violation of parole within three years of their release from custody  • DOC Information  *Be sure to define it using the same language as your facility using the BJS statistics from the total state population. This could be reincarceration within 3 years, 5 years, or ever.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEP Employment Rate</td>
<td>The percentage of former students from a prison program with any reported earnings at one, five, and ten years after exit from the institution; can be compared to those incarcerated at the institution who did not participate in HEP  • State Department of Workforce Development  • HEP program administered interviews with recently released alumni  *If there is a partnership between workforce development and corrections, the Department of Workforce Development or its equivalent will have this data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Employment Rate</td>
<td>The percentage of former students with any reported earnings at one, five, and ten years after exit from the institution  • State Department of Workforce Development  • Alumni reports from Office of Alumni Affairs or Office of Career Services  *Data sharing agreements between the institution and state workforce agency, usually run through the state system office, would be a better option, if available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEP Income</td>
<td>The annual earnings of former students one, five, and ten years after exit from the prison program (excludes zeros); can be compared to those incarcerated at the institution who did not participate in HEP  • HEP program administered survey or interviews with alumni</td>
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<td>The annual earnings of former students one, five, and ten years after exit from the institution (excludes zeros)  • State Department of Workforce Development  • Alumni reports from Office of Alumni Affairs or Office of Career Services  *Data sharing agreements between the institution and state workforce agency, usually run through the state system office, would be a better option, if available.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Status</td>
<td>Pell Grant receipt as proxy for low-income or economic status; Only for SCP sites  • Data from FSA or Office of the Registrar  *Required reporting for SCP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Security Level</td>
<td>Federal designation of institutional level of security (e.g., minimum, low, medium, high, administrative)  • DOC Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence Length</td>
<td>Length of incarceration based on judicial sentencing  • DOC Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Served</td>
<td>Amount of time in months that a student has already been incarcerated for their current sentence  • DOC Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Motivation

## Academic Outcomes

Learning Critical Thinking

The textbooks, media, or other instructional tools being utilized for course materials can affect student learning outcomes. Critical thinking is a key component of academic success, and evaluating the materials used in courses can provide insights into how well students are developing these skills. This can be assessed through assignments, course evaluations, and faculty interviews. The ACTively Open-Minded Thinking Scale is one tool that can be used to measure critical thinking, which involves actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information derived from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

- HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students or alumni
- Adapted from the Actively Open-Minded Thinking Scale

## Engagement

### Student Engagement

The degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning is an important indicator of academic quality. This can be measured through student surveys, interviews, or through the Sense of Belonging Scale. The Sense of Belonging Scale (SBS) is an example of a tool that can be used to measure students’ feelings of belonging and connectedness to the educational environment.

- Adapted from the Sense of Belonging Scale (SBS)

### Time Spent on Coursework

The amount of time a student spends on their assignments for the class and the amount of time faculty spend on grading assignments can also be indicators of academic quality. This information can be collected through course evaluations, faculty interviews, or by comparing course syllabi between HEP and main-campus programs.

- HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students or alumni
- Comparison of course syllabi between HEP and main-campus

### Course Materials

The textbooks, media, or other instructional tools being utilized for classroom instruction and used for or in conjunction with a course can also be indicators of academic quality. This information can be collected through faculty interviews, course evaluations, or by comparing course syllabi between HEP and main-campus programs.

- HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students or alumni
- Comparison of course syllabi between HEP and main-campus

### Critical Thinking

Students’ abilities to actively and skillfully conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action can also be indicators of academic quality. This information can be collected through assignment evaluations, faculty interviews, or by comparing course syllabi between HEP and main-campus programs.

- Assignment evaluations
- AAC&U’s Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric
- Adapted from the Actively Open-Minded Thinking Scale

### Learning Outcomes

Statements that describe the knowledge or skills students should acquire by the end of a particular assignment, course, or program, and help students understand why that knowledge and those skills will be useful to them can also be indicators of academic quality. This information can be collected through faculty interviews, course evaluations, or by comparing course syllabi between HEP and main-campus programs.

- HEP program administered survey or interviews with faculty
- Comparison of course syllabi between HEP and main-campus

### Academic Motivation

A student’s desire regarding academic subjects and their education incorporating their understanding of self-efficacy, determination, and resilience to continue their learning can also be indicators of academic quality. This information can be collected through student surveys, interviews, or through the Academic Motivation Scale.

- Adapted from the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS–C)

### Engagement KPIs

<table>
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<th>KPI</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</tr>
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</table>
| Student Engagement | The degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning | HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students or alumni; Adapted from the Sense of Belonging Scale (SBS)

### Assessment of Qualifications

The qualifications held by faculty members teaching courses including academic discipline, degree attainment, and teaching experience can also be indicators of academic quality. This information can be collected through faculty interviews, CVs of faculty, or by comparing course syllabi between HEP and main-campus programs.

- CVs of faculty
- Comparison of course syllabi between HEP and main-campus

### Experience KPIs

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</tr>
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</table>
| Prior College Experience | The past postsecondary history of enrolled students (e.g., some college, no degree; associate degree; bachelor’s degree) | HEP student application information; HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students or alumni; Comparison of course syllabi between HEP and main-campus; CVs of faculty

### ACADEMIC QUALITY

How can we measure the academic quality (e.g., student sense of belonging, faculty workload, faculty credentials and experience) of HEP programs and how that quality is consistent with comparable programs of study in main campus environments?

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- Adapted from the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS–C)

Many of these metrics are already being collected by your local Department of Corrections, Department of Workforce Development, or the Office of the Registrar or Career Services Department on your main campus. As a best practice, justice-involved students should be included in your institution’s student information system (SIS), and the system should code students participating in HEP as a cohort, group, or other indicator to make data analysis possible.

| Likely Accessible or Already Being Collected | May Need Additional Partners or Metrics to Collect | This information may be challenging to obtain and likely will require strong relationships and conversations between partners |
### Civic Engagement

How can we measure HEP students' own understanding of civic engagement (e.g., civic action, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, diversity attitudes) formed through their involvement in HEP programs?

<table>
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| **Civic Action**           | Students' intentions to become involved in future community service or civic engagement, focusing on participation and memberships in communities and community organizations | - HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students  
- Adapted from the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)  
*(e.g., How likely are you to become involved with your community? How are you involved within your community now? Describe your involvement in an organization or group.)* |
| **Interpersonal & Problem-Solving Skills** | Students' ability to listen, work cooperatively, communicate, take the role of the other, think logically and analytically, and solve problems | - HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students  
- Adapted from the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)  
*(e.g., How well do you work cooperatively with a group of people?)* |
| **Diversity Attitudes**    | Students' attitudes toward diversity and interest in relating to culturally different people | - HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students  
- Adapted from the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)  
*(e.g., How much do you enjoy meeting people who come from backgrounds very different than your own?)* |
| **Political Awareness**    | Students' extent to which they pay attention to politics and understand what they encounter | - HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students  
*(e.g., How aware are you of political or social issues? What political issues do you care about?)*  
*This information may be challenging to obtain. Work with your internal facility contact to see the facility's comfort level with questions around politics and political activity.* |
| **Leadership Skills**      | Students' personal assessments of their own leadership skills and understanding of their ability to motivate and inspire others and build an effective team to achieve a combined vision | - HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students  
*(e.g., What is your role as a leader? What does leadership mean to you? Who has been a leader in your life?)* |

### Soft Skill Development

How can we measure soft skills (e.g., adaptability, empathy, trust, creativity, opennessmindedness) developed among incarcerated students and HEP alumni?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KPI</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Potential Data Source (e.g., Sample Measure)</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Hope**                   | Students' understanding of the positive feeling that something desired can be had or will happen | - Adult Hope Scale  
*(e.g., Even when others get discouraged, do you know you can find a way to solve the problem?)* |
| **Adaptability**           | Students' ability to embrace challenges, try new things, and learn quickly in changing situations | - International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)  
*(e.g., How easily do you adapt to new situations?)* |
| **Empathy**                | Students' understanding of the feelings of others and the utilization of multiple perspectives to make decisions | - International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)  
*(e.g., How well do you anticipate the needs of others?)* |
| **Trust**                  | Students' willingness to believe in others and be transparent about their actions and beliefs | - International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)  
*(e.g., Do you believe what other people say? How do you know what information or people to trust?)* |
| **Creativity**             | Students' ability to find new and inventive ways to solve problems and explore the unexplored | - International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)  
*(e.g., Do you like to solve complex problems?)* |
| **Open-Mindedness**        | Students' openness to other people's ideas and experiences, while also considering alternatives to everyday problems | - International Personality Item Pool (IPIP)  
*(e.g., Do you try to identify the reasons for your actions? How open are you to other people's ideas?)* |
| **Time Management**        | Students' ability to prioritize responsibilities and use their time productively across school, work, and personal time | - HEP program administered survey or interviews with current students  
*(e.g., How do you balance all your responsibilities?)* |

### Justice-Involved

The term "justice-involved" is the human-centered language that refers to a person who has interacted with the justice system. In the context of higher education in prison, the term usually refers to anyone currently incarcerated, though it may also be used to describe alumni who have been released from prison, those who are under local, state, or federal supervision, or those who experienced alternative sentencing.