Welcome to College Inside, a newsletter about the future of postsecondary education in prisons.

SEPTEMBER 9 2022

College, clemency, and inside voices

Rahsaan “New York” Thomas on the day of his graduation ceremony from Mount Tamalpais College at San Quentin. Photo: R.J. Lozada.

One of our College Inside contributors got big news: Rahsaan “New York” Thomas, the inside host of the Ear Hustle podcast out of San Quentin, got word that he is going home in about 5 months. He cleared the last big hurdle last week when the California parole board signed off on Governor Newsom’s clemency.

Even though Rahsaan finished his associate’s degree – one of the factors cited by Newsom’s office as a reason for granting clemency – in 2020, he also just celebrated his graduation in June. (Rahsaan recently wrote about his winding journey to a college degree for The Marshall Project.)

Don’t miss Rahsaan’s story we published earlier this year on why education matters for people serving extreme sentences. He’s also helping to build a prison-to-journalism pipeline with his non-profit, Empowerment Avenue.

“For those of us serving long sentences, recidivism rates and jobs can’t measure the success of our college education,” Rahsaan writes. “My pursuit of a degree started in 2016, approximately 16 years into a 55-years-to-life sentence. I would have to live to be 85 years old to evaluate whether an associate’s degree will break the cycle of incarceration that’s circled my adulthood.”

More on clemency

While we’re talking about clemency, Johnny Pippins has still not received clemency from Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker. He had to withdraw from his Ph.D. program at University of Iowa in August. He remains optimistic about his petition and still plans to pursue his doctorate.

In September, I moderated a panel at the RiseUp Conference on Higher Education and Prison with Johnny and Brandon Brown, who has had two unsuccessful attempts at clemency in Maine despite his educational achievements while incarcerated.

Both Johnny and Brandon have similar stories in that Illinois and Maine are two of the 16 states that have eliminated parole, meaning that clemency – an inherently political process – is their only option for early release. In Brandon’s case, he’s technically still in custody, but he’s out in the community, attending graduate school, and teaching college classes thanks to legislation that he helped write.

We also heard from Mark Osler, a law professor at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota and a national expert on clemency. Mark pointed out that many people who have successful clemency applications have been able to access higher education, not only because it’s evidence of personal growth but also because they gain the skills they need to successfully tell their own stories.
First Person: Why college matters for people serving extreme sentences

I attended a college surrounded by fences “adorned” with barbed wire. In early 2021, at 50 years old, I earned an associate’s degree from Mount Tamalpais College, which is located on the lower yard of San Quentin State Prison. It’s been life changing.

Mount Tamalpais College, which we call Mt. Tam, provides a classroom education on the prison grounds. The teachers are volunteers from other schools including Stanford, San Francisco State University, Harvard, and Berkeley. It has a study hall area where tutors are available five nights a week and a recently opened computer lab with 36 laptops that allow communication with teachers and access to reference materials through a “mediated internet,” according to Kirsten Pickering, research program fellow.

For incarcerated people, the quality or success of a college program is often measured by recidivism rates. By that standard, Mount Tamalpais, formerly the Prison University Project, is a success. Its students had a recidivism rate of 17 percent compared to the 65 percent recidivism rate for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation as a whole, according to a 2011 program evaluation.

Moreover, MTC provides jobs for graduates on parole. I’ve seen Dimitri, a former student, come back into the prison, dressed up in a sharp black suit, as an employee of Mt. Tam. The college recently hired Richard “Bonaru” Richardson, the former editor in chief of San Quentin News. I know of at least three other former incarcerated students that are now Mt. Tam employees.

For those of us serving long sentences, recidivism rates and jobs can’t measure the success of our college education. My pursuit of a degree started in 2016, approximately 16 years into a 55-years-to-life sentence. I would have to live to be 85 years old to evaluate whether an associate’s degree will break the cycle of incarceration that’s circled my adulthood. Proof of the quality of a Mount Tamalpais education has shown itself in several other ways that impacts society and my life.

Incarcerated graduates have a positive influence on their peers and families. I remember attending a graduation where the valedictorian was a man with locks. His siblings attended the event, two sisters and a brother, plus his mother, sat in the front row as he gave a short speech. Afterwards, one of his sisters said, “I’m so proud of my brother. He’s the first to graduate from college in our family. And if he can do that from prison, I can get my degree too.”

The influence of college on peers is also apparent on the yard. In other prisons, the conversations you usually hear about are sports, war stories, or women. At San Quentin, you can walk by and ear hustle (overhear) debates about ethics, politics, or Plato’s Allegory of the Cave.

A 2016 qualitative study featuring interviews with 27 Mt. Tam students showed that the program positively transformed how students think about themselves, others, and their futures.
Editor’s Note:
Mount Tamalpais College was founded in 1996 as the Prison University Project, and operated as an extension site of Patten University. In January 2020, the program changed its name to Mount Tamalpais College when it became a candidate for accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). The college is the first independent liberal arts institution dedicated specifically to serving incarcerated students.
Deciding the rules of the game

Many comments focused on the role of corrections agencies in approving and evaluating prison education programs. They have neither the expertise nor the resources to properly evaluate education programs, advocates said. In addition, they argued that the regulation is asking corrections departments to do what state higher education departments and accrediting agencies already do.

Commenters expressed concern that the extra burden put on corrections agencies could disincentivize them from partnering with colleges to offer education in the first place and produce unintended barriers to new programs, particularly in light of the staff shortages that have plagued corrections departments across the country.

"Beyond a lack of expertise, oversight entities also lack the staff capacity and resources/funding to fulfill this role, which may discourage them from supporting postsecondary programming simply due to the regulatory burden," Ithaka S+R wrote.

"Moreover, correctional agencies operate from a distinctly different set of priorities, namely security and control, that may fundamentally disincline them from supporting access to higher education for those in their custody."

While corrections agencies would ultimately have authority to determine which programs are allowed into facilities, “requiring DOCs to monitor and evaluate prison education programs is unnecessary because it is not mandated by statute and accreditation and approval agencies already oversee higher education,” noted the Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison.

The Bard Prison Initiative, which serves 300 students in seven New York prisons, said that higher education in prison should reflect the same standards and be responsible to the same agencies that accredit and monitor higher education outside of prison.

"The more we create separate and prison-specific processes, the less college-in-prison will resemble higher education outside of prison and risk becoming a backwater of low quality and exploitation," they wrote.

The proposed regulations also give broad discretion to correctional agencies in determining which students would be admitted to programs. While Pell eligibility is “sentence-blind,” some advocates also expressed concern that corrections agencies would limit enrollment to people who will be released soon or exclude learners with certain convictions. They urged the Education Department to explicitly...
Some stakeholders also proposed greater accountability mechanisms for corrections agencies and/or an appeals process if programs were denied, and advocated allowing states more room to determine the appropriate entity to perform monitoring and evaluation of prison education programs.

Must vs. may

The conversation about metrics hinged largely on the use of a single word: must. A big part of the role of oversight entities is to approve prison education programs and determine whether they meet the “best interest” of the students. The language matters because “must” requires a program to collect data on those metrics, whereas “may” does not.

The proposed rules use the term “must” in laying out a list of data that corrections agencies and colleges have to collect. But many commenters argued for more flexibility in determining what is actually feasible and relevant to their particular program.

The data the proposed rules would require includes:

- Further education
- Job placement rates
- Earnings
- Instructor turnover
- Credit transfer and degree pathways
- Academic and career advising.

The current list of metrics, representatives of prison ed programs and researchers argued, was adopted from the language in the bill passed by Congress, but they were intended to be examples of the things that agencies might consider when looking at programs, some commentators noted. They are prescriptive and not based on research, much of which is still nascent, critics said.

Hudson Link expressed concern that the current required metrics could lead to some students being denied admission and others being admitted because they were likely to be successful based on those criteria.

“A devastating consequence of this could be college programs creating admissions practices that screen for a student’s type of conviction, the number of years on their sentence, or other criteria that would result in a student body with as few reentry barriers as possible,” they wrote.

Several state agencies reported that they would be unable to meet some of the data collection requirements. The Kansas Department of Corrections said that it could not track job placement rates, partly because it allows eligible students regardless of length of sentence into programs. In addition, the department has specific policies prohibiting contact with people returning to the community, and the state agencies in Kansas do not currently have any form of data-sharing agreement in place.

Other state correctional agencies indicated that they do not want to be responsible for assessing whether or not prison education programs were operating in the “best interest” of students, notably the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

“We are gravely concerned about being the entity to determine the qualifications of college professors, staff turnover, transferability of credits earned, and professor performance evaluations,” Anthony J. Annucci, acting commissioner, wrote on behalf of the department.

Their position deviated from that of the Correctional Leadership Association, which represents the leaders of all U.S. state corrections agencies, the federal Bureau of Prisons, military prisons, and several larger county correctional agencies. “We believe that corrections directors are the appropriate entity to approve or reject a [prison education program] and conduct the ‘best interests determination’,” executive director Kevin Kempf wrote.

“While we appreciate that stakeholders and advocates in the prison education space have raised concerns about this designation…given the nature of correctional institutions and safety and security considerations, corrections agencies must be given the authority to assess and evaluate whether a prison education program should be permitted inside a facility.”

Reentry services was another theme in many of the comments. The nonprofit College and Community Fellowship noted that several of the metrics focus on reentry indicators, but students cannot meet them without reentry support. Another issue brought up was the two-year time frame for data collection and reporting, which some stakeholders noted would not be feasible given the time it takes to set up data sharing agreements.

Correspondence courses and juvenile facilities

Colleges such as Adams State University and Rio Salado Community College that offer print-based programs are urging more clarification around correspondence classes, including specifying that correspondence students are Pell eligible and including a different approval process that recognizes their unique instruction mode.

They argue that correspondence courses are the only options for students in some places, but because they serve a limited number of students in many facilities it’s not practical to enter into agreements with every single corrections agency. Adams State, for instance, serves 800 students in 357 facilities in 50 states. Only 12 percent of the facilities served have more than five Adams State students.

Rio Salado College, a two-year college in Arizona, enrolls 1000 correspondence students at 45 different facilities. Nearly half of those facilities had only one student. “It is unlikely that any of the facilities would collaborate or engage in the cumbersome prison education program application and evaluative process for a handful of students,” they wrote.
Juvenile justice advocates such as the Youth Law Center also noted that the proposed regulations remove the current Pell eligibility for people in juvenile justice facilities and county jails. In 2014, the Education Department clarified that under current rules, people who are incarcerated in local or county jails, or juvenile detention facilities, ARE eligible for Pell grants for any education program they can access from their facility. The same applies to people in pretrial detention, or who are awaiting sentencing.

The proposed regulations would allow people in juvenile facilities or jails who are already enrolled in college programs to continue to use Pell until 2029, but would require new students confined in those facilities to be enrolled in an approved prison education program.

## News & views

- For the Associated Press, Aaron Morrison reported on who President Biden’s student loan forgiveness leaves out: a generation of Black and Hispanic people who were shut out of federal financial aid during the U.S. war on drugs. “An estimated hundreds of thousands of convicted drug offenders had their access to federal financial aid delayed or denied, including Pell Grants and student loans,” Morrison wrote. “If they wanted to go to college after their prison terms ended, these offenders had to take on larger, often predatory, private student loans. Some were discouraged from seeking federal aid by a requirement to disclose their drug record on financial aid applications, while others put off attending college or dropped out entirely.”

- Even though the First Step Act was a bipartisan, landmark criminal justice reform act signed by President Trump in 2018, conservative media outlets and politicians are lambasting politicians and others who hire formerly incarcerated people. “Ninety-five percent of state prisoners will be set free at some point,” wrote Billy Binion for Reason. “The question we have as a society is what we let them do with that freedom when they get it. If you support law and order, you should want all of them to succeed for the sake of that principle, not despite it.”

- For our partner WBEZ, reporter Anna Savchenko visited Logan Correctional Center, a women’s facility outside of Springfield and the only prison in Illinois where women can earn a bachelor’s degree. The program from Northwestern University launched this fall, after operating at Stateville Correctional Center, a men’s prison, since 2018.

  “These programs are extremely rare in Illinois and around the country,” Anna writes. “While college students across Illinois return to campus this month to start a new semester, there are few options for women in prison. Logan has the only liberal arts degree-granting curriculum for incarcerated women in Illinois.”

- The Prison Letters Project is a collaboration between John J. Lennon, a prison journalist in New York, and Emily Bazelon, a staff writer at the New York Times Magazine. After Emily wrote a cover story about the exoneration of a prisoner named Yutico Briley, she began to receive more mail from people in prison. Because she couldn’t handle all the letters personally, she partnered with her students at Yale Law School (where she’s also an adjunct) to log portions of the letters into a public database.

  The project is hosted by Freedom Reads and the Law and Racial Justice Center at Yale. If you are interested in learning more about a particular person’s case or connecting with them, please write to prisonlettersproject@yale.edu. (https://freedomreads.org/prison-letters-project)
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OCTOBER 6
2022

BY CHARLOTTE WEST

The firehouse behind prison walls

Actor Max Thieriot plays incarcerated firefighter Bode Donovan on CBS’s new drama, Fire Country. Photo: Bettina Strauss/CBS

In a trailer for CBS’s new firefighting drama, Fire Country, an opening scene of a wild, windswept coast in Northern California cuts to a parole hearing. Bode Donovan, blond locks tucked neatly behind his ears, stands before a committee of three unsmiling bureaucrats. The hard-edged twang of Kane Brown’s “Riot” plays in the background.

“I want to say I take full responsibility for my actions,” says Donovan. “I stand before you a different man.”

In the next shot, Donovan, played by actor Max Thieriot, clammers off a bus at a California corrections fire camp. “Your life is pretty simple: work hard, do what I tell you, reduce your sentence, and you go home to your families sooner,” fire captain Manny Perez (played by Kevin Alejandro) tells the men.

Fire Country, which premiered October 7, brings the conversation about incarcerated firefighters, prison labor, and second chances to primetime.

The show (which Cal Fire officials do not endorse) appears to have the expected dose of interpersonal intrigue — in one controversial scene, for instance, Donovan brawls with a civilian firefighter. In the real world, California’s incarcerated firefighters have long served as a below-the-radar front line that protects local communities.

Opportunity or exploitation?

The timing of a new report on career opportunities for formerly incarcerated firefighters couldn’t have been better (https://bit.ly/3D7gfoV). The study was authored by student researchers affiliated with Underground Scholars, an academic support program for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students, and published this week by the Institute for Research on Employment and Labor at the University of California at Berkeley.

The number of incarcerated fire camp workers has dwindled from 4,500 in 2012 to 1,600 last year. More and more have paroled without others to fill their spots, even as California’s wildfires raged. Centering the voices of former firefighters, the report explores both the rehabilitative and exploitative aspects of California’s fire camp system.

The researchers found that California’s prison fire camps create meaningful experiences for incarcerated men and women and offer tangible benefits like sentence reduction. At the same time, incarcerated firefighters receive little recognition and low wages for doing the same job as civilian fire crews and face an uphill battle in pursuing careers in firefighting. Their pay ranges from $1 to $5 per day, and an extra $1 per hour while actively fighting fires, the study found.

The fire camps are controversial. Criminal justice reform advocates argue that the system is akin to slavery, forcing men and women to put their lives on the line for pennies. But participating in the fire camps is voluntary.

One formerly incarcerated firefighter interviewed for the study noted that...
most of the criticism of the fire camps come from activists who have not been incarcerated themselves.

“I am not on board with the extreme antagonism we see in activist circles towards the fire camp program,” the interviewee said. “We...know that labor is an issue in prisons and that fire camps are not the principal type of labor we should be worried about...if we’re concerned with it from the labor/slavery perspective, let’s not focus on the single most humane place in the prison system.”

The story of a prison town

Thieriot, who grew up in Occidental in Sonoma County, pitched the series to CBS to highlight small towns where going to college isn’t the norm. “Most of my friends joined the military or went to work for Cal Fire out of high school,” he told TV Guide.

That’s the story of many rural communities in California, including in Susanville, a former logging town that’s been in the headlines since last year when the state announced the impending closure of one of the prisons located there.

Last spring, my Open Campus colleague Nick Fouriezos and I visited Susanville. There, Lassen Community College’s fire science program runs academies for Cal Fire. It also used to be the main training hub for incarcerated firefighters in Northern California.

As Nick wrote in his Mile Markers newsletter, hundreds of incarcerated firefighters have cycled through basic firefighting training run by the college. The trainees are then deployed in hand crews, who help remove vegetation and construct fire lines, based at 15 fire camps in Northern California. But the number of incarcerated students bound for fire camps has dwindled due to the impending closure of the California Correctional Center in June 2023.

When the prison closes, the Sierra Conservation Camp in Jamestown, Calif. will take over training for the entire state.

Under an agreement with Cal Fire, students who train in Susanville receive three college credits through Lassen Community College and a Cal Fire certificate that is recognized by other agencies. Cal Fire covers the cost of the training with no expense to the student, said Anna Pasqua, the college’s fire science coordinator.

The opportunity for incarcerated firefighters to earn college credit for fire training will end with the closure of the prison.

Direct contact with the outside world

While the college’s fire camp training program will be discontinued, it will maintain its relationship with the firehouse currently located at the California Correctional Center, which will soon move to High Desert State Prison. The firehouse behind the walls operates like a normal fire department on the outside, with a group of around 15 men responding to calls both in the prisons and in the local community. In addition to the training they receive on the job, they also have the opportunity to earn an associate’s degree in fire science through the college.

Carlos Romo used to be one of them. Now 30, he was incarcerated at the age of 18 and spent the last decade trying to rehabilitate himself. He’d tried to go to college while incarcerated at other prisons, but faced challenges with registering for classes or getting the required textbooks.

He completed his associate’s degree last spring and then moved onto campus and enrolled in the Cal Fire Academy at Lassen College after being released in fall 2021.

Romo said that working in the firehouse provided something rare in prison: direct contact with the outside world. Responding to incidents such as traffic collisions and medical calls meant he interacted with the general public, and that made his transition back into society easier.

Typically in California, people are released to the communities where they lived before they were incarcerated. But Romo, who is from Los Angeles, wanted to stay in Susanville because of the support he had from the staff and faculty in the fire science program.
Last fall, Romo completed a three-month academy that allowed him to be hired as an entry-level firefighter with Cal Fire. The position is seasonal, with a base monthly salary of around $3,450-4,350 (and weekly bonuses of $1,700-$2,200 when actively fighting fires).

Last spring, Romo was working three 24-hour shifts each week with Cal Fire and finishing up several general education classes at Lassen Community College. Now, he's moved into his own apartment and is enrolled in an online bachelor's program in fire protection administration and technology at California State University Los Angeles.

**Licensing and expungement**

Although recent legislation is supposed to make it easier for formerly incarcerated firefighters to expunge their records, Romo isn't eligible because the law only applies to firefighters who were at fire camps, not prison firehouses. It also excluded fire camp workers who were not active on the fire line, such as clerks and kitchen workers – about 45 percent of the incarcerated residents of fire camps.

In addition, the law only applies to people convicted of crimes deemed non-violent, even though fire camps are open to so-called “violent offenders” as long as they meet other requirements and have “sustained good behavior” in prison. (Certain offenses such as sex crimes and arson automatically make some people ineligible.)

The Berkeley study noted that the legislation is so narrow and subject to judicial discretion that very few people have benefited from it.

A major barrier for many formerly incarcerated people seeking firefighting positions is the requirement to have an emergency medical technician license. California has a lifetime ban for people convicted of multiple felonies from being certified as EMTs, and individuals convicted of a single felony cannot become an EMT for 10 years after their sentence ends.

While Romo was able to find a firefighting job even though he had a conviction, there are still limits on his career. While Cal Fire and federal agencies don't always require EMT licenses, most municipal fire departments do.

Romo said he doesn't need an EMT license right now because he's fighting wildfires and doesn't respond to medical calls. But it could hold him back in the future, he said. He hopes to eventually apply for expungement after he's had a few years on the job and finished his bachelor's.

Many formerly incarcerated firefighters reported that none of the certificates they earned in prison or the work they had done counted as experience for outside firefighting, according to the Berkeley study.

One woman interviewed for the study said her background became a liability when she went back to school. “They knew about my experience from being inside a fire camp, because I did have hella certificates for shit that I wanted to show and post,” she said. “I wanted to tell people about what I know and what I learned. These folks made [it] very clear that they did not like me, they did not like where I got my skills from, and that it was a problem.”

One of the recommendations in the Berkeley report is to standardize training across fire camps, for instance by using Cal Fire's fire academy curriculum, and for all camps to offer credentials that would be recognized by outside agencies.

For his part, Romo sees his firehouse experience as an asset and isn't shy about sharing his story. "Because of where I came from, and the experience that I got from being an incarcerated individual, I have more than what a lot of my coworkers have."

He said he's even mentoring some of the younger guys he works with at Cal Fire. "In a way it helps me be an example for them," he said. "Doing my bachelor's while working, a lot of the younger individuals are like, 'hey, what I gotta do to go to school?'"

**News & views**

- Prisons fail to implement programs that are successful at setting incarcerated people up for success in the future, such as giving people opportunities to earn money, obtain an education, or gain relevant job skills, according to a new report from the Prison Policy Institute (https://bit.ly/3yP4NM5). Some key stats on education:
  - Only 17 percent of people in state prisons are currently participating in educational programming and 10 percent are in job training.
  - Of the more than half of people who said they had never participated in educational programming, 18 percent (125,000 people) had never been offered the chance. Others said they weren't qualified, weren't allowed, could not get in or were waitlisted.
  - Half (53 percent) of people without a high school credential reported former or current enrollment in education programs, compared to less than 30 percent of people with at least a high school diploma, pointing to a lack of higher education in prison.
- A new study by Melissa E. Abeyta, a higher education researcher at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, sought to understand how formerly incarcerated Latino men attending California community colleges make meaning of their experiences in postsecondary education. In California, Latino men make up 41 percent of the prison population, but only 38 percent of the state population.

Participants described a lack of preparation that stems from being incarcerated during traditional high school years and a lack of knowledge about how to navigate higher education. “Students from this population face intergenerational trauma from first-hand experiences of the school-to-prison pipeline and aspects of their carceral identity may be triggered as they are transitioning to their student
identity,” Abet wrote. “Although the participants were aware of their past experiences and the obstacles they had to overcome to be students, they were empowered by their newly formed student identities.”


• For EdSource, Betty Márquez Rosales visited the Alameda County Library trying to boost literacy and a love for books among teenagers who are incarcerated in juvenile hall. “The library might be one of the few spaces at the juvenile hall where they can learn to enjoy reading and educational conversation without the pressure of tests, grade scores, and credits that they would need to graduate from high school,” she wrote. (https://bit.ly/3TbVaPu)

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• At the end of September, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a law a bill that makes phone calls from prisons free of charge. The new law places the cost of calls not on incarcerated people — or the people receiving calls from them — but on the state. California is the second state after Connecticut to enact such a law.

Newsom also signed SB 990, which allows people on parole to relocate to a county where they can pursue an educational or vocational program of their choice, rather than having to go back to the county where they last lived. While changing counties was previously allowed at the discretion of someone’s parole officer, this codifies their right to move.

In addition, the California governor signed off on AB2417, which requires juvenile facilities to inform incarcerated youth of their rights, including safe conditions and access to education. It’s important as the state Division of Juvenile Justice shuts down in 2023, with most youth remaining in county facilities.

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About this newsletter

Welcome to College Inside, a newsletter about prison education produced by Open Campus, a national nonprofit newsroom. Topics we cover include college-in-prison programs, Pell Grants for incarcerated students, career and technical education, and education in juvenile justice facilities, among other higher education issues.

We launched College Inside in December 2021 and now publish a biweekly e-newsletter and a monthly print edition. You can subscribe to the e-newsletter at https://bit.ly/3ToP2Uz or you can sign up for the print edition at https://bit.ly/3oMCmss or by writing to Open Campus Media, 2460 17th Avenue #1015, Santa Cruz, CA 95062. You can email charlotte@opencampusmedia.org via JPay, Corrlinks, TextBehind, Securus, Connect Network, or Getting Out.

Please note that Open Campus is a news organization that covers higher education. Open Campus doesn’t investigate criminal cases or report on crime-related issues, nor do we provide educational courses or assist individuals in enrolling in education programs or obtaining transcripts. When we receive a letter, we will add you to our mailing list to receive College Inside. Given the volume of letters that we receive, we cannot always respond personally, but we appreciate your interest in our work.

We work with incarcerated writers, but do not usually publish unsolicited manuscripts, essays that have been published elsewhere, poetry, or stories on topics other than education. We are looking for story pitches that offer new and surprising insights about higher education in prisons with a clear angle and broader takeaway. (A pitch should be a paragraph with the main argument, like a thesis statement, and an explanation of the unique perspective that you offer on the subject). We prefer to work with writers in shaping their story ideas, so reach out if you have an idea. Please be patient. It may take several weeks before we are able to respond.

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