Reflections on Building a Partnership with Corrections

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR COLLEGE-IN-PRISON PROGRAMS

JOHN JAY COLLEGE
INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY

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The John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity (the Institute), formerly known as the *Prisoner Reentry Institute*, is a center of research and action at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY. The Institute is committed to providing opportunities for people to live successfully in the community after involvement with the criminal legal system. Capitalizing on our position within a large public university and recognizing the transformational power of education, the Institute focuses much of our work on increasing access to higher education and career pathways for people with conviction histories. The Institute's comprehensive and strategic approach includes direct service, research, technical assistance, and policy advocacy.

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INTRODUCTION
Purpose of the Publication

This guide is part of an effort to provide college providers with the necessary tools for developing programs that are responsive to the unique environment of correctional facilities. While designed specifically for college programs that operate in New York State (NYS) Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) facilities, this guide may also be useful for organizations and colleges outside of New York that wish to establish or enhance college-in-prison programs.

We recognize that there are a number of experienced and nationally recognized college-in-prison programs in New York State whose practices exemplify many of the ideas contained in this guide. We further acknowledge that this guide draws from the work of these seasoned college providers. It is our hope that, whether college providers are experienced or emerging, this guide will be useful for all those engaged in the important work of providing access to higher education for incarcerated people.

New York State has been a leader in both higher education and general education in prison since the 1800s and was previously recognized as having the best prison education system in the country. At its peak in the 1990s, when incarcerated people were eligible for federal Pell and New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grants, there were 70 higher education programs in New York State prisons. When legislators revoked Pell and TAP eligibility for incarcerated people in the mid-1990s, the number of students enrolled in college programs throughout New York State prisons dropped precipitously from 3,445 students to 256 students.

Through the commitment and dedication of incarcerated people, colleges and universities, philanthropies, and supportive DOCCS officials, the number of college programs has gradually risen. As of spring 2020, there were 18 college programs involving 34 colleges in 30 New York State prisons.[1]

The growth of college-in-prison programs motivated a group of college providers who offer credit-bearing coursework in New York State prisons and jails to come together in 2015 to form a mutual interest group, the New York Consortium for Higher Education in Prison (NY-CHEP). The consortium provides a unique opportunity for peer-to-peer learning, resource and information sharing, and a venue to coalesce around issues of interest to collectively advance toward shared goals.[2]

THIS RESOURCE GUIDE WILL PROCEED AS FOLLOWS:

- Know Your Partner: DOCCS Facility Staff
- Establishing and Maintaining a Strong Partnership with DOCCS
- Important Operational Details for a Successful College-in-Prison Program
- Building a Student-Centered College-in-Prison Program

The resource guide also includes several appendices with relevant DOCCS Directives, a sample event planning form, and a DOCCS organizational chart.

1 This history is described in detail in Mapping the Landscape of Higher Education in New York State Prisons available at justiceandopportunity.org/research/mapping-the-landscape-of-higher-education-in-new-york-state-prisons/.

2 For more information on how to connect with NY-CHEP contact technical assistance staff at the John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity at justiceandopportunity.org/about/contact-us/.

SECTION

1

Know Your Partner: DOCCS Facility Staff

We begin this guide with a general overview of key DOCCS facility staff positions and roles that are integral to operating a successful college program. There may be facility-by-facility variations, but in general, these are DOCCS staff positions that are most relevant to college-in-prison operations. As DOCCS frequently rotates personnel, it is wise to develop an understanding of the roles separate from your relationship with the individuals occupying them. Regardless of the specific individuals in these posts, these are the correctional positions important to designing and implementing a college program.

Moreover, although the staff at the specific facility where the program operates will be your frontline partner, they are part of a hierarchical structure within the executive branch of the NYS government. Superintendents are appointed by the Commissioner of DOCCS; the Commissioner is appointed by, and reports to, the Governor.

Further, while department directives are implemented at the facility level, they are written and disseminated by DOCCS Central Office, which oversees operations across its facilities. Central Office officials that are key for college programs are the Deputy Commissioner for Programs, the Assistant Commissioner for Programs, and the Director of Education. In short, the facility positions described below are part of larger political and organizational contexts in which college-in-prison programs operate.

THE SUPERINTENDENT

is responsible for overseeing the overall operation of the facility, including security and disciplinary policies and procedure, administrative responsibilities and record keeping, facility maintenance, and all services and programming. Three Deputy Superintendents, described below, report directly to the Superintendent.[3]

THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SECURITY (DSS)

manages the security coverage for the facility, including all security matters pertaining to the implementation of the college program. This person oversees the volunteer orientations delivered to college faculty and staff and makes determinations if the equipment, supplies, and program procedures meet security requirements. Additionally, the DSS is the ultimate authority over corrections officers and oversees which posts officers are assigned to within the facility, including those who are assigned to monitor education buildings where college classes are held.

THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF ADMINISTRATION (DSA)

consults with the Deputy Superintendent of Programs over matters such as having books delivered to the facility storehouse and transporting books from the storehouse to the college program.

THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF PROGRAMS (DSP)

is the primary facility contact for the college program and is your main contact for developing program procedures and troubleshooting issues that arise.[4] The DSP is the person that regularly communicates with the Superintendent about the college program.

The DSP oversees all of the programming at the facility, of which the college program is a significant but relatively small part. Other programs that typically operate in facilities include high school equivalency (HSE) programs, vocational, recreational, and religious programs.

The DSP reviews all course materials, sometimes receiving assistance from the facility's Media Review Committee. It is important to establish an effective timeline for the submission and review of course materials prior to the beginning of each semester to ensure that materials are approved and distributed to students before classes begin.

3 In addition, some facilities have a First Deputy Superintendent who operates in between the Superintendent and the three deputy superintendents.

4 Some facilities also have an Assistant Deputy Superintendent of Programs, who may be your point-person for these responsibilities.

THE EDUCATION SUPERVISOR

oversees the daily operation of the facility's education programs and reports directly to the DSP. The college program is included in this position's official responsibilities; however, it is just one of a larger portfolio of education programs that this person oversees.

The administrative staff of the college program will have regular communication with the Education Supervisor. The office of the Education Supervisor is usually located in the education building where classes are held, which allows for frequent interactions between the Education Supervisor and college providers. The Education Supervisor is also likely to have daily contact with students and can help troubleshoot college-related issues as they arise. Additionally, the Education Supervisor typically oversees the computer lab and staff who create the call out lists, which permit students to travel to a certain part of the facility for various activities, including college programming.

THE LIBRARIAN

is mainly responsible for the facility library, and is a point of communication about books, magazines, and other resources for student use. The Librarian may sometimes oversee the scheduling of college activities and events in the facility's various locations. College providers are often in frequent communication with the Librarian at their facility.

THE VOLUNTEER SERVICES SUPERVISOR

coordinates the involvement of all volunteers in the facility's volunteer programs. DOCCS classifies college staff and faculty as volunteers, and the college programs operating at DOCCS facilities are considered volunteer programs.

The Volunteer Services Supervisor is your main contact for coordinating the volunteer clearance process for college staff, faculty, and any guests invited by the program.

Once college personnel are approved as volunteers, they must complete an orientation conducted by the DOCCS Volunteer Services Division. It takes a considerable amount of time for Volunteer Services to complete the vetting process for volunteers, so it is important to submit the application as soon as possible to ensure that staff, particularly faculty, will be allowed into the facility at the start of the semester.

The Volunteer Services Supervisor typically is responsible for multiple facilities and may not be stationed at the prison in which your program is located. Directive 4750 (included in the appendix) details the process for obtaining volunteer clearance, eligibility requirements, and DOCCS' expectations of volunteers.

THE OFFENDER REHABILITATION COORDINATORS (ORCS) AND THE SUPERVISING OFFENDER REHABILITATION COORDINATOR (SORC)

oversee an incarcerated person's rehabilitative process, including the completion of mandated programs, the parole process, and preparation for reentry. The SORC may be able to provide the college with certain types of personal documentation or information, such as a student's high school equivalency (HSE) records or social security number for use in college applications or other processes. Also, the SORC may be the person to perform some of the DSP's usual responsibilities when the DSP is not on duty or otherwise unreachable.

THE WATCH COMMANDER

supervises a variety of activities in the correctional facility. This role often becomes a main contact for college providers in the evenings and on weekends when other supervisory staff, such as the Education Supervisor or DSP, are not in the facility. A college provider would call this person with any sudden scheduling issues, such as an emergency cancellation of an evening class.

While the positions described above play defined and specific roles in the operation of a college program, facility support staff such as secretaries, mailroom workers, and administrative staff, also play integral, behind-the-scenes roles. Acknowledging and thanking these staff when you are at the facility will also contribute to a successful college-in-prison program.

SECTION

2

Establishing and Maintaining a Strong Partnership with DOCCS

College-in-prison programs require strong partnerships with DOCCS, both with Central Office and the individual facility. Although this guide is intended predominately for existing college-in-prison programs, it may be helpful for colleges launching programs in correctional facilities as well. New programs should begin the process by connecting with the DOCCS Director of Correctional Education Programs. A strong partnership with DOCCS is vital to both launching and sustaining a college program. In this section, we discuss the basic parameters for a strong college-DOCCS partnership.

DEVELOP SHARED GOALS

The development of shared goals with your facility partner provides a vital foundation for a college-in-prison program's success. Explicit goal setting and acknowledgement of each partner's goals and ambitions will promote an enthusiastic and creative partnership. Having a clear understanding of program goals can help determine the specific procedures and practices that will allow both the college and facility partners to create the most effective college program possible.

It is useful to establish goals in written form so that they can be referenced over the course of the partnership. This will help partners' ability to adapt to evolving student needs and changing circumstances while keeping the bigger picture in mind. Reviewing program goals with your facility partners at regular intervals will provide a useful opportunity for identifying successes, challenges, and opportunities for innovation.

Learning about the facility's other programs will help you see how the college program can contribute to a more dynamic and purposeful educational path for prospective students. Awareness of other programs at the facility can offer effective avenues for student recruitment or other opportunities for collaboration. Connecting with primary, secondary, vocational, and other types of educational programming can facilitate the development of a broader educational community at the facility that is likely to support both the college and the facility's realization of their respective missions. Additionally, the goal setting process should also take significant inspiration from the perspectives of current, former, and prospective students, who comprise the college program's primary stakeholders. Their perspectives can inform the goal setting process in invaluable ways.

Your facility partner may hope that the college program will contribute to a more positive environment, and students working toward their HSE while incarcerated may aspire to attend college but lack cultural capital to apply. These distinct but interrelated objectives may be operationalized to create a peer tutoring program in which incarcerated college students tutor students in the facility's HSE program. The subsequent bridge that is created between the prison's HSE and college programs may serve to fulfill the goals of college and facility partners as well as incarcerated students.

ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATION STRUCTURE

It is vital to establish a regularly scheduled communication structure that will allow for the timely review of how the program is operating. A regular meeting schedule lets partners know that there will be a forum to discuss operational issues, identify and troubleshoot problems, review roles and responsibilities, provide feedback, and discuss the future of the program. A regular meeting schedule also signals that the institutional commitments are important and reciprocal, and they are opportunities to continue building relationships between key personnel from each organization.

Key stakeholder representatives should be expected to attend the meetings, such as the college-in-prison program director, the program coordinator, the facility Deputy Superintendent of Programs, and the Education Supervisor. Other key staff can attend regularly or occasionally depending on their roles and responsibilities and issues to be discussed. An agenda for the meeting should be sent out ahead of time to allow for input by all partners. A meeting attendee should be designated to keep minutes of the meetings, flagging any items that need further follow up. Scheduling meetings at regular intervals will help set expectations and ensure full communication. Meeting weekly or bi-weekly may be necessary during the initial implementation period of a new college program; meeting monthly or bi-monthly is a suitable time frame for more established programs.

In addition to regular meetings, communication between partners should include phone calls in between in-person meetings as needed. Each partner should designate primary and secondary contacts to address on-the-spot or emergency issues as they arise.

IT IS ALSO HELPFUL TO ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS TO BE USED IN RESPONSE TO CERTAIN TYPES OF EVENTS. For example, if a student is sent to the Special Housing Unit (or "SHU"—the DOCCS term for solitary confinement), how will the college learn about it? How will the college gather details about the length of that student's departure from the program and whether or not the student will be returning? Or, if someone incarcerated at the facility expresses interest in applying for the program, does facility staff know to share that information with college personnel? Although facility-by-facility circumstances will largely determine protocol, working with your partner to collaboratively establish these plans will help streamline procedures and contribute to smooth operations by encouraging partners to reflect on individual and shared responsibilities.

Establishing a communication structure that includes regular meetings is a good foundation for all the recommendations we include in this guide. A clear and transparent communication structure avoids management by crisis or anecdote. Planning a structure for communication also creates opportunities to foster deeper understanding by both the college and facility staff and share appreciation for all those who make the college program possible.

CLEARLY DEFINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: CREATING A STRONG, COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM PROPOSAL

College-in-prison programs are implemented by two distinct institutions, higher education and corrections, who each have different primary missions.[5] Yet, as colleges and DOCCS have demonstrated in programs across the state, it is possible to build strong partnerships for the successful operation of a college program. A clear definition of partners' roles and responsibilities is foundational to a strong partnership.

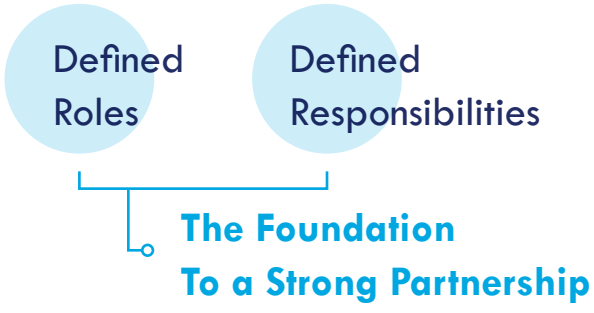
A college provider must initially work with the DOCCS Central Office to seek permission to begin developing a college program in partnership with a designated facility. After receiving preliminary approval from DOCCS Central, the college provider must complete a DOCCS Program Proposal in collaboration with their facility partners. The DOCCS Program Proposal is a form used to establish or modify programs in DOCCS facilities. In addition to providing a basic template for college providers to describe the components of the proposed college program, the Program Proposal helps delineate the roles and responsibilities of each partner. Once the Program Proposal is approved by the facility Superintendent, the facility then sends the proposal to DOCCS Central Office for final approval. Updates to the Program Proposal should be made in collaboration between the college and facility partners, with ultimate approval sought by the facility from Central Office.

Collectively completing the Program Proposal allows the college and facility partners to articulate their individual and shared responsibilities. Elements of a program proposal might include: program goals and purposes; how the program aligns with DOCCS' mission; student eligibility requirements; number of students to be served; number of classes to be offered; and key operational provisions. Additionally, it may be helpful to clarify roles and responsibilities, such as the processes related to the recruitment of applicants or the scheduling of classes or college events.

The Program Proposal can also specify the key contacts of each institution. While standard responsibilities are outlined in the section above pertaining to key facility staff, there may be facility-by-facility variations that impact how roles and responsibilities of facility staff are determined for your program. Similarly, college providers should help their facility partners understand the roles of key point people at the college who support and help run the program.

Defining and creating a shared understanding about each partner's roles and responsibilities is crucial to a partner's ability to make timely, well-informed requests and to direct requests to the correct personnel. This understanding will enable the design and maintenance of effective and efficient communication structures and practices among those who regularly interact with the program. Clarity in roles contributes to efficiency, consistency, and morale.

Work with your partners early on to define the structures of working relationships, identify what constitutes each partner's domain, and establish shared goals to guide the pursuit of mutually beneficial policy development and implementation. Additionally, be aware that this process is ongoing and dynamic: while deliberation on key operational details from the outset will serve your partnership greatly, so too will a shared commitment to a process that permits revisions and innovation throughout the duration of the relationship.



5 For a fuller discussion of how these institutional missions differ and coincide see Mapping the Landscape of Higher Education in New York State Prisons available at justiceandopportunity.org/research/mapping-the-landscape-of-higher-education-in-new-york-state-prisons/.

DEVELOP SHARED KNOWLEDGE OF PARTNER INSTITUTIONS' POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS

Building and cultivating a partnership with DOCCS will help you develop a college program that is responsive to students' needs and interests and create a rich learning community. Reciprocal learning between partners is a healthy and necessary component of any partnership, not just a partnership between DOCCS and a college. Developing an understanding of partners' policies and protocols contributes to effective operations and an atmosphere of respect.

Working to understand DOCCS' security protocols will enhance your ability to envision and prepare for the implementation of an excellent college-in-prison program. As prisons are first and foremost custodial institutions, security protocols will outweigh other concerns for DOCCS personnel. Operating a college-in-program thus requires that the college provider have a thorough knowledge of the facility's policies and procedures. Similarly, facility staff will need to be informed of educational standards that the college program must meet to maintain its accreditation and funding. Providing and clarifying such information for DOCCS can help your facility partners identify where they can be flexible or where corrections infrastructure might be mobilized to best support college programming. Mutual understanding of each partner's policies and protocols enhances both partners' ability to plan, implement, and continuously improve a college program that is responsive to the correctional setting and student needs and interests.

Shared understanding of each partner's procedures will also contribute to your ability to collaboratively innovate new procedures specific to the partnership. Standardizing certain types of interactions that occur very frequently between the college and the facility will make for more efficient operations. For example, in organizing events such as graduations, guest speakers, or workshops, providers must work with facility partners to handle logistical arrangements like reserving space and creating gate passes and call out lists.

CALL OUT
A formal notification for an incarcerated person to report to a particular place at a particular time. College providers develop call out lists with their facility partners so that students can report to classes and other activities at designated times.

GATE PASS
A security requirement for outside visitors to enter a DOCCS facility that includes names of guests and materials entering the facility on a per visit basis. College providers must coordinate with their facilities in advance to receive gate passes for their driver and vehicle to enter the facility grounds. Providers should speak to their facility partners to understand appropriate timelines for submitting required information.

Working with the facility, college providers can create a college-specific event request form that is user-friendly for both the college and facility staff. Such a form could provide space to organize gate pass and call out information, and provide information on the venue for scheduled activities, effectively streamlining what might otherwise be a time-consuming exchange of information. An example of such a form is included in the appendix of this guide.

As each institution differs in its core functions, there will inevitably be much to learn throughout the relationship.

Working to understand each other's institutional structures may illuminate exciting opportunities and help partners identify areas where joint problem-solving will be necessary for smooth program implementation.

DEVELOP STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENT

The continued success of the college-in-prison program depends upon the understanding and commitment of its stakeholders. These stakeholders extend beyond college and facility staff and include college and corrections leadership; students, alumni, and their families; and other departments at the college, such as the registrar and financial aid. Community organizations, reentry networks, funders, legislators, and the media are also important stakeholders to consider. To this end, college and facility partners should find ways to share accomplishments, challenges, and goals with these various groups and individuals.

Consider what you and your facility partner want stakeholders to know about your program. There are likely to be some commonalities, such as the number of students enrolled, examples of courses offered, and number of credits and degrees earned. Some stakeholders, such as legislators, funders, and college administrators will be interested in the costs of the program. In putting information together, think about what you hope to achieve from providing a particular audience with this information, such as support for program funding, expansion of the program, and a sense of shared pride in student achievements.

- Consider ways you might involve various stakeholders in presentations or events in order to highlight specific experiences and information.
- Carefully plan and prepare the message and information that you want to communicate and consider making requests to make an in-person (or virtual) presentation of the information.
- Where possible, consider including program alumni in the presentation to share how the program has made a direct impact on their life. It may even be possible to invite stakeholders to be present in one of your classes.
- Explore the possibility of videotaping your program. When presenting in the community, consider whether it would be possible to have your facility partner join you in making the presentation.
- Prepare concise written information to leave with your audience.

Building and sustaining stakeholder commitment among all the various groups is not a one-time activity; doing so requires continuous attention to ensure that stakeholders become champions for your program.

Regularly strive to strengthen stakeholders' understanding of the program, investment in its wellbeing, and ability to identify and provide meaningful forms of support. Do your best to devote time and resources to this effort.

Remember that the network of actors who constitute the college program's infrastructure at any given moment is vast. Though some interact with the program more intimately, and some hold more institutional authority than others, the nature of everyone's contributions can greatly affect program progress, either by making direct tangible contributions or by fostering an environment that values the program. Every individual connected to the operation of the program is crucial: the corrections officers who usher volunteers through security protocols, the Dean of the college, the families of incarcerated students, the Commissioner of DOCCS, the admissions office staff, program faculty, and many more. Express appreciation for each of them, engage with them as partners in the administration of the program, and where possible, invite them to events such as in-facility graduations, alumni networking events, or student-hosted community-building events.

SECTION

3

Important Operational Details for a Successful College-in-Prison Program

In this section, we offer information about specific types of procedures and practices used in prisons that affect implementation of a college program and ideas for how to successfully manage operations within a carceral environment. The suitability of these suggestions will likely be determined by the opportunities and constraints of each facility and can be adapted for distinct environments and circumstances. Understanding how a prison operates will reduce confusion and disagreement among college and facility partners. Furthermore, it will help the college provider better grasp how the prison environment affects the experience of incarcerated college students.

CREATE AN MOU BETWEEN THE COLLEGE PROVIDER AND FACILITY

The Program Proposal can be a starting point for developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the college provider and facility by describing the operational needs of your program. An MOU is not a contract, but it can be useful for carefully articulating protocols and procedures that partners agree to follow. It can detail major points of the partners' shared vision and outline significant features of program operations such as: key roles and responsibilities, appropriate communication channels, notable milestones in the academic calendar, and other operational considerations that require the cooperation of both college and facility partners. It will be a useful tool to consider in annual program reviews to help identify needed or desired revisions.

DEVELOP PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES SPECIFIC TO EDUCATIONAL HOLDS

All DOCCS facilities are classified as maximum, medium, or minimum-security level, and some facilities are designated to provide certain mental health and medical services. Incarcerated people are similarly classified by their perceived degree of security risk and by the level of mental health and medical services they are assessed to need. This information is then used to designate the facility where each individual will be incarcerated within the DOCCS prison system.

DOCCS may transfer incarcerated people to different facilities throughout the time they are incarcerated. Transfers occur for reasons related to changes in an individual's classification. For example, an incarcerated person may be determined to be of a lower security risk and is therefore eligible for transfer from a maximum to a medium-security prison. Alternatively, a person may be required to complete programming prior to their release, necessitating a transfer from a facility that does not offer the required programming.

College-in-prison programs may request that "educational holds" are placed on students enrolled in the program, which can help prevent students from being transferred to other facilities while they are enrolled in classes.

To request educational holds, college providers submit a list of students and their Department Identification Numbers (DIN) to the DSP. However, while educational holds are an important tool for maintaining retention and persistence, there are limitations to their use. For example, DOCCS may override an educational hold in order to transfer a student to a different facility for security reasons, to ensure that an incarcerated person can complete mandatory programming, or to address health-related issues. Additionally, incarcerated people are permitted to seek transfer to another facility in order to be closer to family. Such transfers would override educational holds when the opportunity for transfer arises. College-in-prison programs that seek to use educational holds should provide applicants with information about how educational holds work during the college application process to ensure that students understand the benefits and limitations of these holds.

If a student is transferred to a different facility despite an educational hold, college providers should determine whether there is another college program at the new facility that might enroll the student during the next admissions cycle. NY-CHEP may also be a useful resource for connecting with college programs operating in other facilities. Developing partnerships with other NYS college-in-prison programs can expedite determining a student's eligibility for admission and transferring college credits. Additionally, there may also be an opportunity to work with the DSP at the student's new facility to assist the student in completing any unfinished course work for the semester in which they were transferred. College providers should work with their partner DSP to explore this possibility, and collaboratively seek the approval and assistance from Central Office. College providers may wish to explore these options with their facility partner and include a provision for educational holds in a program MOU.

CONSIDER PROGRAM MODULES IN THE DESIGN OF YOUR COLLEGE PROGRAM

When planning the academic calendar, college-in-prison providers must consider two primary factors: the availability of students' time and classroom space. Contrary to what many believe, incarcerated people often lead busy lives behind prison walls, with days that are filled with required activities as well as voluntary membership in clubs and other programs. All required and voluntary programming must be scheduled within the venues available, and there are often competing demands for space. Therefore, it is critical to factor

in how prison days are scheduled so that you understand how scheduling needs are managed and are prepared to address scheduling challenges.

PRISON DAYS are divided into modules, usually of two to three hours in duration. There are typically three modules in a day: morning, afternoon, and evening.[6] These modules are formally referred to by DOCCS as "AM," "PM," and "evening," respectively. Incarcerated people must be assigned to activities during two modules each day, which may include working or completing programming. Under DOCCS policy, incarcerated persons can be paid for up to two modules; the pay scale is set by DOCCS and typically ranges from 10 to 28 cents per hour, but some assignments have slightly higher pay scales.

When someone first arrives at a DOCCS Reception Facility at the beginning of their prison sentence, they undergo an assessment that includes medical, psychological, educational, and substance abuse evaluations. The individual is then presented with requirements that must be satisfied prior to their release, which can include completion of educational, substance abuse, or anger management programs, among others. Participation in these programs will be mandated.

Each incarcerated student's academic schedule must be determined in relation to other commitments, such as work and mandated or voluntary programs. For example, if a person is required to complete mandated programs for two modules a day, they will be paid for these two modules. If this person also enrolls in a college-in-prison program, courses must be attended as a third, unpaid module. Alternatively, if a person has already completed all mandated programs, they may work one module and elect to attend college for the second module, thus fulfilling the two module per day requirement; in this scenario, the student would be paid for their work assignment and to attend college. Finally, if a student elects to work two modules per day for pay, they can attend college during the third module without pay.

Participation in a college program is the choice of every incarcerated person, depending on the availability of programs and meeting eligibility requirements.[7] The timing of module assignments and college courses, however, may prevent prospective students from enrolling in classes if scheduling conflicts cannot be resolved. Typically, mandatory programs are scheduled during the morning and afternoon modules. Thus, college programs can minimize conflicts by offering classes during the evening module. If college classes must be scheduled during daytime hours (to accommodate the availability of faculty, for instance) then closer attention will need to be paid to the potential conflicts for students. Learn what you can from your facility partners about how other programs are scheduled to minimize potential scheduling conflicts.

PLANNING FOR SCHEDULING AND MOVEMENT PROTOCOLS

As defined on page 13, a "call out" is a formal notification for an incarcerated person to report to a particular place at a particular time. There are many types of call outs: religious services, medical appointments, personal visits, disciplinary proceedings, court trips, and legal visits.

Call outs are also used for college programming. For each college class and extracurricular event, there must be a corresponding call out that details which students are invited, or expected, to attend. College staff are responsible for creating call outs that accurately reflect their attendance needs. For example, if you have identified 15 specific students who will be enrolled in English 101, you are responsible for creating a call out that lists each student's first and last name and DIN. Additionally, you will need to specify that this call out should be used for the specific dates when class is held. Once created, these call out requests should be submitted to the facility staff designated to manage this responsibility.

6 Some facilities have a fourth "late evening" module.

7 There are several standard eligibility requirements that must be met to enroll in any prison-based college program in New York State. Some of these are determined by educational institutions (e.g. the applicant must possess a high school diploma or HSE). Additionally, DOCCS may have rules regarding an applicant's disciplinary record that may vary by facility. Ultimately, college-in-prison programs have various admission standards and requirements. A fuller discussion of eligibility is available in Mapping the Landscape of Higher Education in New York State Prisons available at justiceandopportunity.org/research/mapping-the-landscape-of-higher-education-in-new-york-state-prisons/.

MANDATORY VS. NON-MANDATORY CALL OUTS
Importantly, DOCCS facilities utilize both mandatory and non-mandatory call outs. College providers should explore which of these designations is most appropriate for college classes and events, and they should share their preference with the facility when submitting each call out request. It may be helpful to vary the use of these designations depending on the type of event, keeping in mind that missing a mandatory call out may cause a student to incur a disciplinary infraction.

Call outs for non-college activities may sometimes interfere with a student's ability to attend class, or cause them to arrive late or depart early. For example, a medical procedure may require a student to visit an outside clinic or hospital for a day or more at a time. A student's need to wait on medication or package lines, or their participation in a family reunion program, may also conflict with class. A call out for a scheduled trip to the commissary, where students can purchase personal items, can also conflict with their class schedule. College providers should discuss these considerations with their facility partners in order to outline an approach for addressing potential scheduling conflicts. Faculty should also be prepared for occasional class disruptions due to facility-wide occurrences, including lockdowns, escape or fire drills, and unexpected events that require all students to return to their units.

As part of college providers' careful management of their relationship with their facility partners, it is critical that call outs are submitted with all information required with timeliness in mind. College providers should work with their facility partners to understand how much time is needed for facility staff to process requests related to the college providers' scheduling needs, including the approval and circulation of call out information. As noted in Section 2 of this guide, it may be helpful to collaborate with your facility partners to co-create an event request form that includes all event-related information. An example of such a form is included in the appendix of this guide.

FACILITY DISCIPLINE AND IMPACT ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION

It is important for college providers to understand how disciplinary infractions can affect a student's ability to participate in a college program. Sanctions for various types of disciplinary violations can include restricting the incarcerated person to their cell or placement in the SHU. Commitment to the SHU or full transfer to another facility can more fundamentally threaten a student's ability to remain enrolled in the college program.

The DSP is the facility staff person who is best able to help college providers understand types of disciplinary infractions (often referred to as "tickets") and related outcomes. They can provide information on length of SHU sentences and disciplinary transfers as issues arise. If a student's movement is restricted for disciplinary reasons, the DSP may be able to intercede to make the student's continued participation in the college program possible. If a student is transferred to the SHU or another facility and the college wants to provide a way for the student to keep up with coursework from afar, the DSP may be able to help coordinate such an arrangement. Additionally, the recent introduction of tablets for incarcerated people may provide future opportunities for remote instruction and continued communication between professors and students, even when student movement is restricted. It will be useful to explore options for remote instruction with facility partners during the crafting of the Program Proposal, as placement in the SHU or other transfers due disciplinary infractions can impact overall program enrollment and funding. Similarly, it is important to inform students who enroll in your program of the ways that disciplinary infractions can affect program enrollment.

SECTION

4 Building a Student-Centered College-in-Prison Program

In deciding to attend college, students are making decisions about how a college education will meet their needs and interests. This is no less true for students who attend college while incarcerated than it is for students who enroll in college in the community.[8] While support for college-in-prison programs is often framed in utilitarian terms for its ability to reduce recidivism, there are other more human-centered and community-minded aspirations for higher education that are applicable to incarcerated and non-incarcerated students alike.

8 A fuller discussion of the role of college is found in Mapping the Landscape of Higher Education in New York State Prisons available at justiceandopportunity.org/research/mapping-the-landscape-of-higher-education-in-new-york-state-prisons/.

An essential value of higher education is building an informed citizenry that is the foundation of a democratic society. Higher education, whether for incarcerated students or students in the community, develops critical thinking skills that connect people to the world in expansive ways and helps students become thoughtful, participatory members of their communities. A college education equips people to live lives characterized not only by improved employment prospects, but also stronger family relations and greater civic responsibility and participation. As discussed throughout this guide, for a college program to achieve these objectives in an environment where student activity is heavily regulated by DOCCS institutional procedures, college providers are encouraged to understand DOCCS roles, responsibilities, practices, and policies.

That said, familiarity with DOCCS policy is only one part of the endeavor of creating a strong college-in-prison program. Understanding the experience of the incarcerated student is of equal importance. There are no stakeholders more knowledgeable, invested, and important than current and former students. Student and alumni perspectives, interests, and contributions should be actively sought and incorporated into program development, implementation, and evaluation.

Incarcerated students have the same goals and aspirations as students in the community, but there are unique stressors that can affect their experience in a college program operating in a prison setting. For example, an incarcerated student may lack access to educational technology and may have difficulty finding a quiet place to study or complete assignments. Students may be preparing for reentry, trying to manage family or legal issues, or handling other issues that demand their attention and intellectual and emotional energy. While expectations for students' academic performance should remain high, understanding some of these common features of incarceration can strengthen a college provider's ability to effectively support students.

The practices for engaging in an effective partnership outlined in this guide are useful practices for engaging in a similar partnership with incarcerated students and alumni. Regularly engaging incarcerated students in discussions pertaining to college program development and operations is the best way to create a program that is responsive to student needs and interests. Consider all of the ways you can develop shared goals with students, appropriately divide leadership and administrative responsibilities, develop communication structures for students to express feedback and share ideas, and generally build a program that centers the pursuit of an excellent student experience. This can be done through inquiries made during enrollment, discussions during advising sessions, standard course evaluations, and group discussions with students during workshops, town halls, or other events.

In addition to deepening your knowledge of how students experience college in the context of their lives amid incarceration, conversations with students will help your program develop shared goals and mutual commitments. Connecting with students allows you to get a better sense of how they experience the program as it operates and helps generate ideas for program innovation. You also might consider working with your facility partners to create an administrative "clerk" position (which DOCCS recognizes as work assignment), a mechanism organizing student-led initiatives, or a dedicated housing unit reserved for students in your program. Many of these innovations will require the approval and collaboration of your facility partners and can be topics for discussion at regularly scheduled meetings between college and facility partners. Harnessing the collective creativity of your staff, facility partners, and student body helps produce a more vibrant college-in-prison program.

AN EDUCATION-FOCUSED HOUSING UNIT offers students an opportunity to deepen their student identity and expands the supports available within the prison learning community. An education-focused housing unit helps students more readily share and store educational materials, access quiet and communal study spaces, and find and share support in the pursuit of educational goals. We encourage creating education-focused housing units that students can opt-in to. This will avoid creating a conflict with housing requirements related to work or program assignments that students may have.

Corrections staff remark that education-focused housing units are often areas where fewer infractions are committed and positive relationships prevail between corrections officers and incarcerated people. There is nationwide precedent for education-focused housing units. In New York, the John Jay College Prison-to-College Pipeline program has a student housing unit at Otisville Correctional Facility. Correctional facilities in North Carolina, New Jersey, and Michigan all offered some version of education-focused housing as part of the Vera Institute's Pathways program. Vera reports that in addition to Pathways sites, facilities in Indiana, Florida, and Washington also offer education-focused housing. If you are interested in the prospect of a college-dedicated housing unit, consult the DSP and the student body to learn more about its viability at your facility.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the success of a college-in-prison program depends upon the strength of the relationships that a college is able to forge with its facility partners and student body. This guide provides information about the foundations of effective partnerships, protocols, and practices that can contribute to thoughtful and responsive program design and implementation, and a framework for incorporating student perspectives. Building and maintaining a comprehensive understanding of DOCCS' institutional structures and procedures, and consistently seeking input from your student body comprise an essential toolkit for developing these relationships and producing a vigorous and supportive college-in-prison program and rich learning community.

Appendix A
Relevant DOCCS Directives for Further Learning

Directives are non-negotiable DOCCS policies and procedures and must be strictly adhered to at all times. You are encouraged to locate the full text of the directives below on the DOCCS website to familiarize yourself with them in greater detail.

For DOCCS' purposes, all college-in-prison program faculty and staff are classified as "volunteers" because they are not paid by the prison system. This means any violation of the following rules can result in the loss of your "volunteer clearance," which would have serious consequences for your ability to continue working at the facility and perhaps have negative ramifications for the college-in-prison program as a whole.

#4750
VOLUNTEER SERVICES PROGRAM

This directive contains the policies and procedures for the administration and supervision of the Volunteer Services Program. It details the program administration and supervision, types of volunteers, volunteer procedures, program monitoring and evaluation, status of volunteers, volunteer misconduct, standards of conduct for volunteers, and applicable policies.

#4803
INMATE PROGRAM PLACEMENT

This directive establishes standard guidelines for assigning individuals to programs and the basic responsibilities of the Program Committee Chairperson. It describes program access, inmate participation in programs, program/earned eligibility—work plan, inmate orientation, Program Chairperson and committee designations, responsibilities of the Program Committee Chairperson, and limited privilege program status.

#4017
INMATE TRANSFER PROCEDURE

This directive describes the procedures for the transfer of individuals between DOCCS facilities. It describes the different security, mental health, and medical classifications that each facility and incarcerated person is assigned.

#4804
ACADEMIC EDUCATION PROGRAM POLICIES

This directive presents policies and procedures that are designed to implement programming that meets identified educational needs and require everyone to work toward obtaining a high school equivalency diploma. Definitions, testing, enrollment policies, inmates with disabilities, procedures for ensuring compliance, post-secondary correspondence courses, and educational records are all enumerated here.

#4401
GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES

This directive describes the three main functions of the Office of Guidance and Counseling: case management, counseling services, and program committee. It contains references, information on relevant staff responsibilities, and special facilities within the DOCCS network.

#4805
SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

This directive describes the policies and procedures of DOCCS to provide all eligible students access to educational opportunities that are comparable to services provided to non-incarcerated students with disabilities. It details special education general policies; definitions; procedures for referral, evaluation, Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, placement, and review; functions of the Committee on Special Education (CSE); responsibilities of the CSE Chairperson; and facilities with special education programs.

#4806
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

This directive describes the policies and procedures around vocational training with the eventual goal of helping incarcerated persons attain marketable job skills. Outlined are common terminology, enrollment policy, recording progress, Training Achievement and Potential Employability Report (TAPER), training & career enhancements, procedures for ensuring compliance, program operation, program closures/modifications/new shop proposals, and equipment request procedures for updates/replacements.

#4807
SPECIAL SUBJECTS

This directive establishes policy, objectives, and procedures for the operation of recreation programs and leisure time activities and describes the duties and responsibilities of recreation staff. The Special Subjects Program includes recreational activities, special events, entertainment media, and inmate organizations.

#4425
INMATE TABLET PROGRAM

This directive contains the DOCCS policies and procedures for tablet usage. It describes common terminology, procedures, termination or suspension of use privileges, kiosk maintenance, and cost and fees.

#4802
INMATE PAYROLL STANDARDS

This directive provides terminology related to the DOCCS inmate payroll system and guidelines for payment of wages for participation in an assigned work or study program. It clarifies general guidelines, special situations for continuation of pay, absences, and extended work day/work week.

Appendix B
Sample Event Request Form

COLLEGE PROGRAM EVENT REQUEST

COLLEGE REQUEST DETAILS	DOCCS RESPONSE
1. DATE AND MODULE:	
2. NUMBER OF STUDENTS:	
3. EVENT TITLE AND PURPOSE:	
4. SETUP REQUIRED: *Any A/V needs:*	
5. COLLEGE PERSONNEL: *Additional guests:*	

6. GATE PASS ITEMS:	

7. CALL OUTS

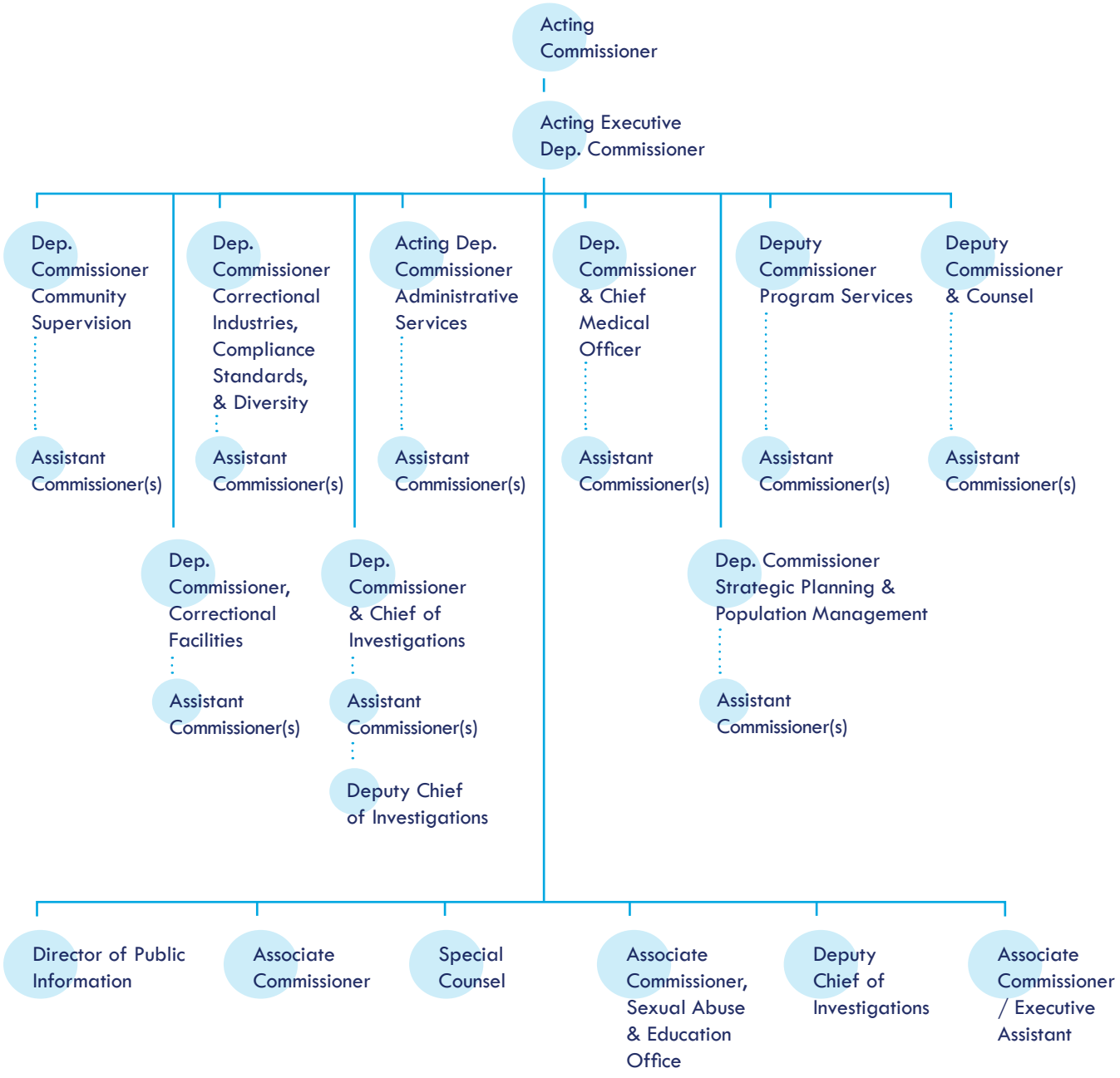
Mandatory:

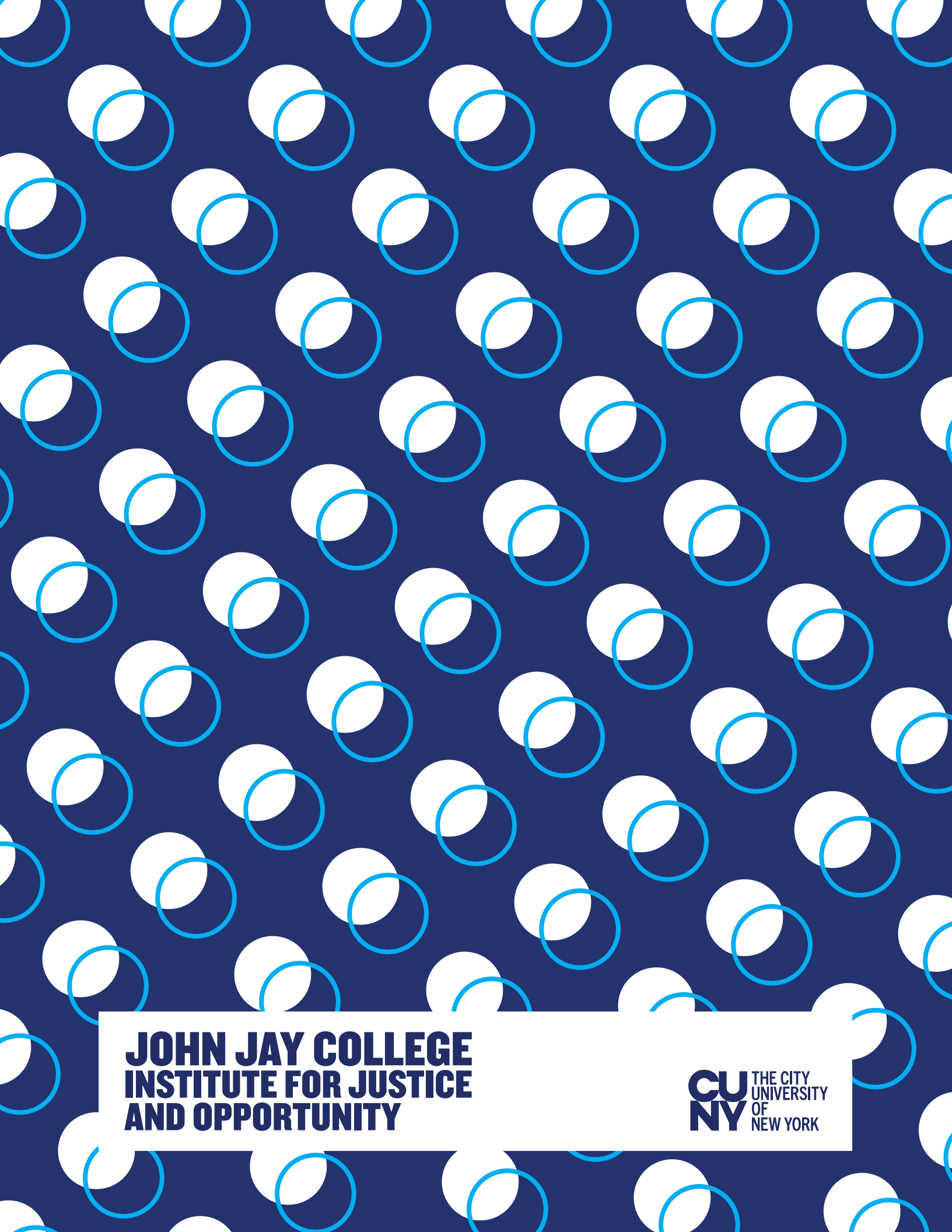
	Last	*First*	*DIN*
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Non-Mandatory:

	Last	*First*	*DIN*
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Appendix C
NYS DOCCS Central Office Organizational Chart

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