



2024 Report

Reentry Grant Program and Rising Scholars

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office | Sonya Christian, Chancellor

Chancellor's Office

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California
Community
Colleges

SONYA CHRISTIAN
Chancellor

March 7, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

Pursuant to AB 1809, the 2018 Higher Education Trailer Bill and Education Code Section 78075, I would like to present to you the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office report on the Rising Scholars and Reentry Grant programs.

AB 1809 established a one-time reporting requirement for the Reentry Grant Program and Education Code Section 78075 established an annual reporting requirement for Rising Scholars. As both of these statutes provided funding for supporting justice involved students, the reporting requirements have been compiled into a single report.

I hope this report serves as an informative overview of the California Community Colleges' Rising Scholars and Reentry Grant programs.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please feel free to contact Executive Vice Chancellor Aisha Lowe at ALOWE@CCCCO.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sonya Christian".

Sonya Christian, Chancellor

Enclosure: Report

2024 REENTRY GRANT PROGRAM AND RISING SCHOLARS REPORT

Prepared By

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (Chancellor’s Office) Rising Scholars Network was established to make college accessible to currently and formerly incarcerated community college students. Key partnerships with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the Foundation for California Community Colleges have helped expand educational programs and support services in correctional facilities and on community college campuses throughout the state, serving nearly 30,000 justice involved students a year.

The 2018 higher education trailer bill, [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 1809](#) established a one-time funding commitment of \$5 million for community colleges to establish or scale programs serving currently and formerly incarcerated students, with a focus on community reentry. The program is referred to as the reentry grant program but the services are interconnected to the Rising Scholars program. Additionally, pursuant to Education Code Section 78075, the Chancellor’s Office is required to submit a biennial report to the Legislature describing its efforts to serve justice-involved¹ students.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Legislature with an overview of the reentry program and a summary of our services to support justice-involved students. Included in this report are the findings and recommendations, along with an analysis of the challenges and barriers encountered by colleges offering and students enrolled in the program. The results of this study demonstrate students’ resiliency and capacity to succeed in spite of academic and personal challenges, and the ability of Rising Scholars programs to improve access to higher education for incarcerated individuals, ease the path to community reentry, and strengthen academic outcomes by providing students with a multitude of supports and services. The report provides insights and perspectives to support program implementation and long-term sustainability and offers future considerations for improving outcomes for Rising Scholars students.

BACKGROUND

In 2014, [Senate Bill \(SB\) 1391](#) established a grant program enabling California state prisons to offer educational opportunities and career technical education programs to incarcerated men and women through partnerships with community colleges. The passage of SB 1391 provided the means to support face-to-face instruction for incarcerated students in an effort to increase job skills and employability upon reentry into the community. Investing in programs that lead to jobs with sustainable wages is essential to the long-term goals of improving outcomes for formerly incarcerated students, helping to reduce recidivism rates and change lives.

The Chancellor’s Office in collaboration with CDCR developed metrics for the evaluation of the reentry grant program. By the end of the three-year pilot, California’s community colleges offered face-to-face instruction in 32 of the 35 state prisons, and in many more county jails and correctional facilities. Additionally, approximately 42 community college campuses operated programs or clubs specifically focused on supporting reentry students. The passage of Proposition 57, the Public Safety and Rehabilitation Act of 2016, further bolstered student

1 “Justice-involved” refers to a person who is currently or formerly incarcerated in a California correctional facility, or currently or formerly detained in a juvenile facility.

participation in educational opportunities available in the prison system while helping to reduce the number of people behind bars. This criminal justice reform initiative authorized early parole consideration for incarcerated men and women serving prison terms for nonviolent offenses through sustained good conduct and participation in educational and career training programs. Under Proposition 57, incarcerated people have the opportunity to complete credit-bearing degrees and certificates that support their rehabilitation and make them better equipped for success following their release from prison. Nonviolent offenders are rewarded for good behavior and participation in activities that lead to milestone completion, rehabilitative achievement and educational merit credits.

Building on the momentum from these statewide efforts, State Assembly Bill (AB) 1809 was passed in 2018 and provided \$5,000,000 in one-time funding to community colleges in support of currently and formerly incarcerated students with a focus on reentry into their communities. The Chancellor's Office developed application criteria, administrative guidelines and other requirements to administer the Rising Scholars reentry program. Forty-four colleges were awarded grants to establish or support existing programs and services serving currently and formerly incarcerated students. The Rising Scholars reentry program aimed to accomplish the following outcomes:

- Increase opportunity and access for currently and formerly incarcerated students to higher education;
- Increase course retention rates¹ among currently and formerly incarcerated students;
- Support strong academic performance by program participants;
- Promote informed and appropriate program pathway goals and objectives to help students attain high-quality, postsecondary credentials; and
- Build long-term and sustainable transition programs to support students' reentry into the community following their release.

The creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Chancellor's Office and CDCR was a significant milestone in the development and expansion of face-to-face instruction available to incarcerated students. The MOU clearly defined and delineated the roles and responsibilities for both the prison and college. While the reentry grant was awarded to 44 colleges (see Appendix B for a listing of the 44 colleges participating in the grant reentry program) in the community college system, the number of colleges providing instruction to currently and formerly incarcerated students is much higher. Out of the 116 colleges statewide, 80 offer educational programs that serve justice-involved students. Seventy two of those colleges have well-established programs that are very active, and eight colleges are in the early stages of program development.

¹ The number of students who did not drop or withdraw from the course and received a valid grade at the end of the term divided by the total number of students enrolled in the course.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Rising Scholars Advisory Committee is to provide technical assistance and guidance to the community college system in order to continue building a strong foundation for student success for this population. The Chancellor’s Office regularly held coordination and planning meetings with a variety of stakeholders that included representatives from the Chancellor’s Office, individual community colleges and districts, CDCR, and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC). The Rising Scholars Advisory Committee developed and adopted guiding principles to support colleges as they exercise their local control to serve justice-involved students. These documents provide practices and recommendations for establishing high-quality programs on campus and in correctional facilities to support students who have experienced incarceration.

LOOKING AHEAD

California remains committed to supporting justice-involved students through policy transformation. In October 2021, two new bills were signed into law that will improve access to educational programs in correctional facilities and college campuses. [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 417](#) formally established the Rising Scholars Network comprised of up to 50 community colleges dedicated to serving justice-involved students. The law builds on many of the same tenets outlined in AB 1809, but rather than one-time funding, AB 417 provides colleges with ongoing funding to support long-term sustainability of existing programs and the development of new programs. The bill also requires reporting and recommendations on the possible expansion of the Rising Scholars Network to all community college districts and campuses. [Senate Bill \(SB\) AB 416](#) requires CDCR to offer inmates who have a general education development certificate or a high school diploma the opportunity to participate in educational programs provided by the California Community Colleges, the California State University (CSU), the University of California (UC) or other regionally accredited, nonprofit colleges or universities in California. In addition, SB 417 enables incarcerated individuals to use full-time enrollment status to serve as their full-time work or training assignment.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

This program expanded my horizons and helped me view the world from a different perspective. The skills and knowledge I gained while pursuing my associate’s degree have helped me realize that education is one of the most important endeavors one can embark upon.

– Rising Scholars student

METHODOLOGY

The Chancellor’s Office contracted with the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group) to evaluate the success and efficacy of the Rising Scholars reentry grant program. The evaluation activities were guided by research questions developed around key metrics in AB 1809 and in the Chancellor’s Office Request for Applications (RFA) 18-087 Amendment 1 Currently and Formerly Incarcerated Students Reentry Program to assist in the assessment and reporting of program outcomes for Rising Scholar students enrolled in a California community colleges. Additionally, the evaluation

activities aimed to understand better how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted students, colleges and key partners as they rapidly transitioned to remote course delivery and correspondence education in response to the global emergency.

The RP Group applied a mixed-methods approach to fulfill the reporting requirements specified under AB 1809 and the Chancellor's Office RFA. To evaluate the effectiveness of the Rising Scholars program, the RP Group synthesized results from an online college survey, quantitative analysis of longitudinal, student-level data, and interviews conducted with a subset of participating colleges and critical partners in the Rising Scholars Network.

COLLEGE SURVEY

The Chancellor's Office administered a semi-annual reporting survey to colleges participating in the reentry grant program in fall 2020 and spring 2021. The survey instrument consisted of quantitative and qualitative questions designed for grant recipients to report on the development and implementation of program elements and educational services to support Rising Scholars students enrolled at their college. Key areas in the survey included:

- Programming type and students served;
- Number of employees supporting the program;
- Professional development opportunities;
- Student support services; and
- External partnerships and community partners.

DATA ANALYSIS

The RP Group analyzed statewide data from the Chancellor's Office Management Information System (COMIS) to assess and report enrollments and outcomes for Rising Scholar students taking courses at California community colleges. A descriptive analysis of student characteristics, enrollments and academic performance was conducted to support the evaluation of program outcomes. The analysis included students enrolled between summer 2018 and spring 2021 who were identified as currently or formerly incarcerated based on COMIS data elements. Findings from the quantitative analysis informed the development of the interview protocol, helped refine the college survey instrument, and fulfilled the following:

- Accountability reporting required under AB 1809 for colleges that received grant funding for the Rising Scholars program
- Documentation of program outcomes according to the data collection and reporting activities outlined in the Chancellor's Office RFA

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

The camaraderie that developed reinforced my desire and motivation to not only be in school, but to excel. I graduated with honors. The sharing of knowledge and stories that was birthed in our tiny little space inspired me to grow and define goals. I developed a support network that lives beyond my graduation.

– Rising Scholars student

COLLEGE SURVEY FINDINGS

Colleges were required to complete the reporting survey on a semi-annual basis as a stipulation for continued funding per the data collection and reporting requirements outlined in the Chancellors’ Office RFA. All 44 colleges completed the survey each term, resulting in a 100% response rate. Key findings from the most recent survey administered

Table 1. Program Type

Which programming does your college support?	Count	Percent
Currently Incarcerated Students Inside Correctional Facilities	4	9%
Formerly Incarcerated Students On-Campus	13	30%
Both	27	61%
Total	44	100%

Table 2. Spring 2021 Student Count

How many students did your program serve in spring 2021?	Count	Percent
Currently Incarcerated Students	9,217	88%
Formerly Incarcerated Students	1,258	12%
Total	10,475	100%

Table 3. Total Student Count

How many total students has your program served since July 1, 2019?	Count	Percent
Currently Incarcerated Students	24,912	88%
Formerly Incarcerated Students	3,327	12%
Total	28,239	100%

Table 4. Number of Employees

How many employees are assigned dedicated time to serve Rising Scholars students?	Count	Percent
2 or Fewer	10	23%
3 – 5	24	55%
6 – 8	7	16%
9 or More	3	7%
Total	44	100%

Table 5. On-Campus Positions

Which on-campus positions are paid through the Reentry grant and dedicated to serve Rising Scholars students?	Count	Percent
Academic Counselor	20	46%
Student Mentor/Peer Mentor Leader	17	39%
Program Coordinator	14	32%
Program Director	13	30%
Program Assistant	12	27%
Career Counselor	7	16%
Student Services Specialist	6	14%
Faculty Coordinator	6	14%
Mental Health Counselor	5	11%
Tutor	5	11%
Outreach/Transitions Specialist	4	9%
Financial Aid Representative	1	2%
Retention Specialist	1	2%
Student Services Advisor	1	2%
Other	10	23%

Note: Respondents could select more than one option therefore percentages total more than 100%.

Table 6. Professional Development Opportunities

What professional development opportunities were provided for faculty and staff serving Rising Scholars students?	Count	Percent
Conferences and Workshops	18	42%
Regional and Statewide Meetings	12	30%
Facilitated Discussions	10	23%
Guest Speaker Events	6	14%
Information Sessions	4	9%
Other	14	33%

Table 7. Non-Academic Services

Which non-academic services does your program provide?	Count	Percent
Food Bank/Food Insecurity Access	40	91%
Mental Health Services	34	77%
Employment Assistance	33	75%
Housing Assistance	31	71%
Record Clearance	27	61%
Transportation Assistance	26	59%
Other	15	34%

Note: Respondents could select more than one option therefore percentages total more than 100%.

Table 8. External Partnerships

Does your program have external partnerships with community-based programs, probation, parole, or county jails?	Count	Percent
Yes	37	84%
No	7	16%
Total	44	100%

Table 9. Justice Agency Partners

Which community partners does your program work with?	Count	Percent
Probation	26	70%
Parole	21	57%
County Jail	21	57%
Other	22	60%

Note: Respondents could select more than one option therefore percentages total more than 100%.

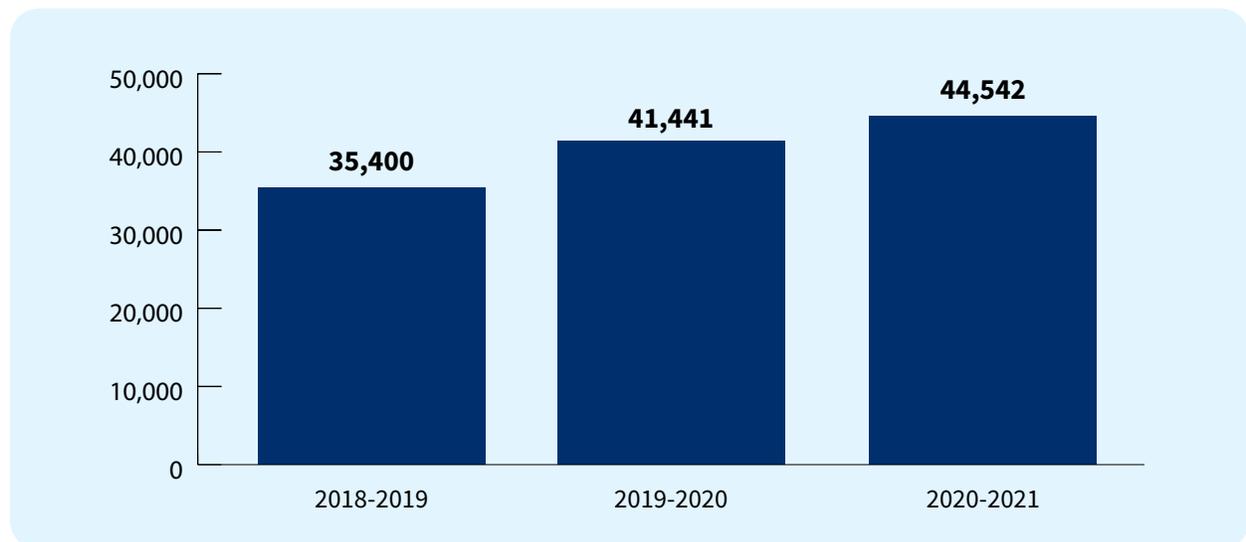
DATA ANALYSIS

The following section includes the results drawn from the quantitative analysis of statewide data extracted from the Chancellor’s Office Management Information System (COMIS) on currently and formerly incarcerated students. The purpose of this examination was to gain a deeper understanding of how the reentry grant program impacted student access and achievement at participating colleges. Key metrics were analyzed over three academic years beginning with 2018-2019. This timeframe captures how enrollments and academic outcomes changed over the two-year period following program implementation in 2019-2020.

ENROLLMENT

One of the primary goals for colleges participating in the reentry grant program was to provide currently and formerly incarcerated students with improved access and exposure to college courses. Despite statewide enrollment declines stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of Rising Scholars students enrolled in California community colleges grew considerably. As Figure 1 displays, in the two-year period following program implementation, enrollments increased from 35,400 to 44,542. Enrollments grew most significantly in the first year following implementation, while enrollment growth in the second year was lower likely due to the pandemic. Overall, colleges participating in the program saw a 26% increase in their Rising Scholars enrollments from 2018-2019 to 2020-2021.

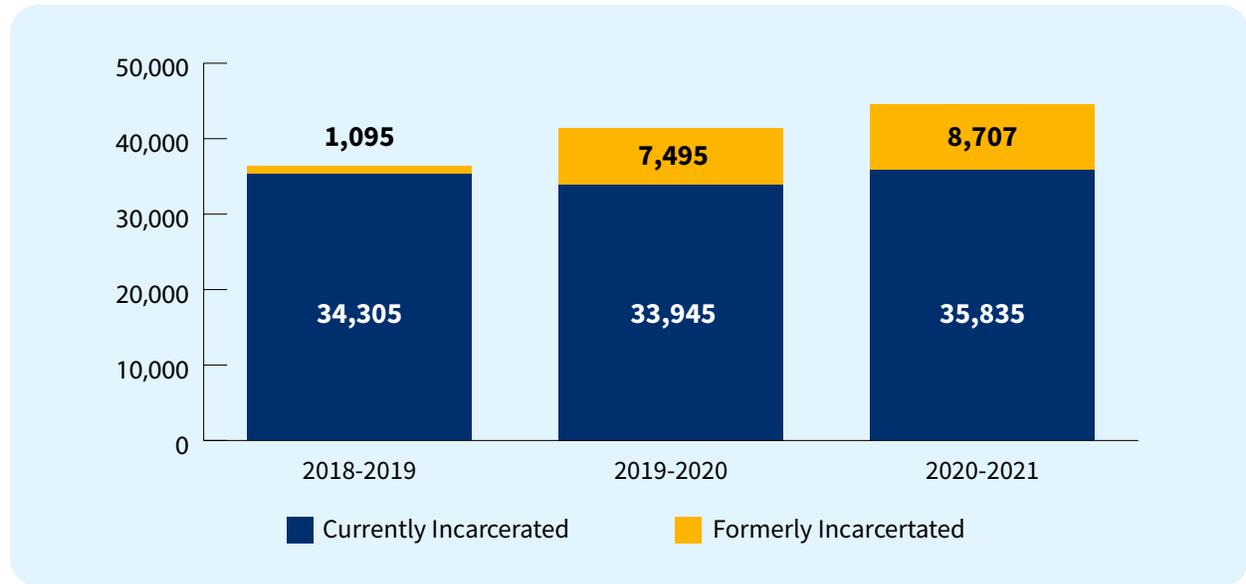
Figure 1. Enrollments for Rising Scholars Students



Source: Chancellor’s Office Management Information System

When examined by student group, enrollments increased for both currently and formerly incarcerated students; however, the majority of growth stemmed from formerly incarcerated students attending on-campus courses. As Figure 2 displays, enrollments for this student population increased from 1,095 in 2018-2019 to 8,707 in 2020-2021, while enrollments for currently incarcerated students increased from 34,305 to 35,835 in that same period.

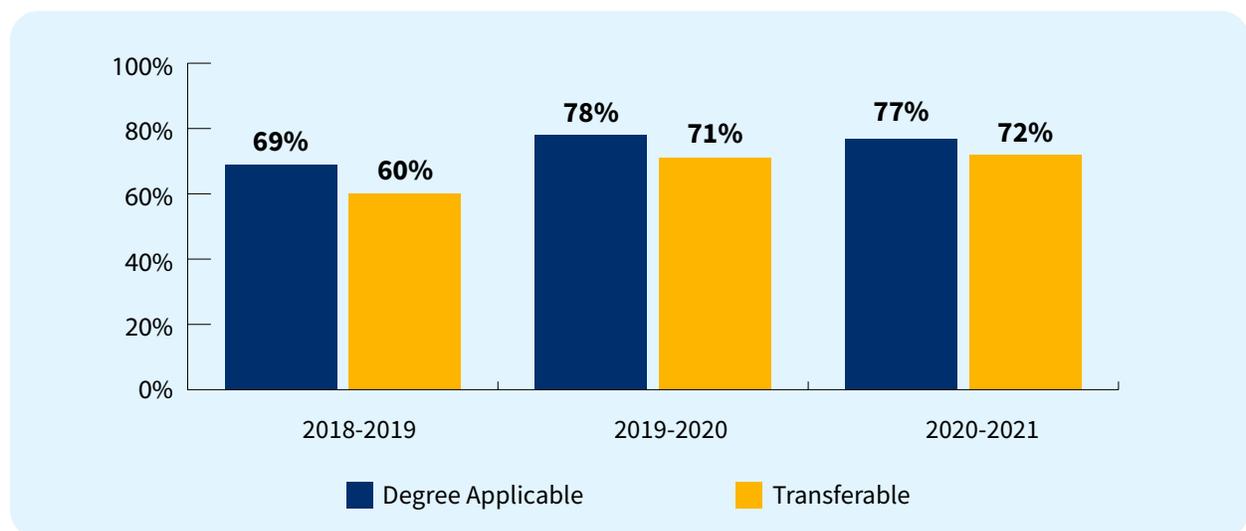
Figure 2. Enrollments by Student Population



Source: Chancellor’s Office Management Information System

In an effort to support retention, persistence and long-term goal achievement, colleges reported aligning their curriculum to program pathways by expanding their course offerings to include more degree-applicable and transferable courses. As Figure 3 shows, enrollments in degree-applicable courses increased 8% in the two years following program implementation, while enrollments in transferable courses saw a 12% increase.

Figure 3. Percentage of Enrollments That Are Degree Applicable/Transferable

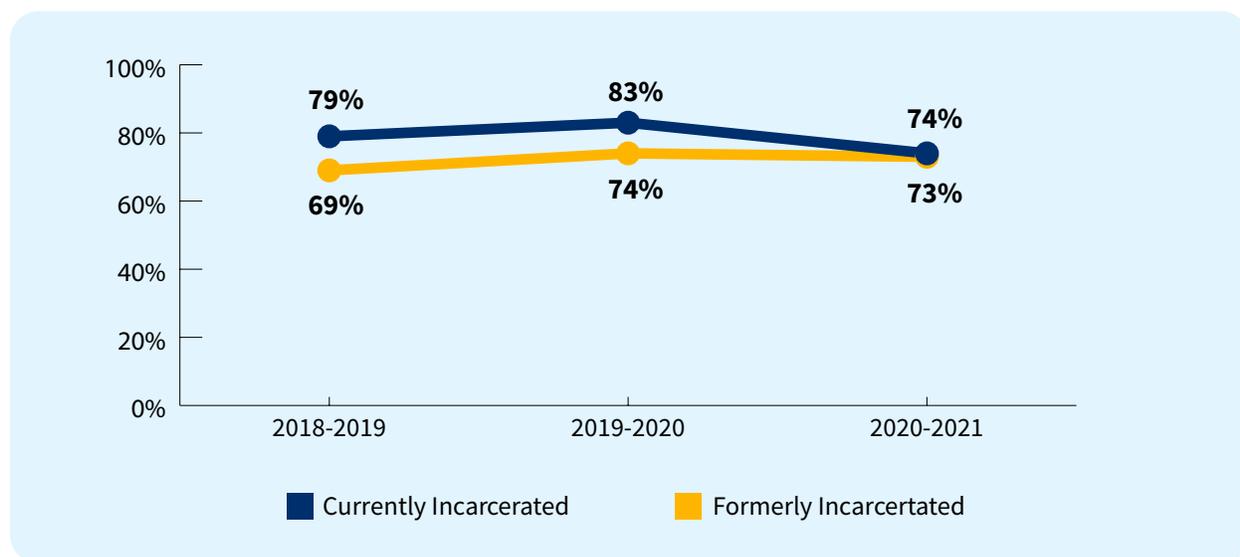


ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Colleges sought to support students' progression and successful completion of college courses through activities focused on academic supports and clear program pathways. Rising Scholars students demonstrated improved course success rates¹ in the first year following implementation. As shown in Figure 4, currently incarcerated students displayed a 4-percentage point increase in course success rates from 2018-2019 to 2019-2020, while course success rates amongst formerly incarcerated students increased 5 percentage points in that same period.

In the second year following implementation, course success rates decreased amongst Rising Scholars students partially due to the abrupt transition to remote instruction stemming from the pandemic. As displayed in Figure 4, course success rates for currently incarcerated students dropped by 9 percentage points from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. Course success rates for formerly incarcerated students were less impacted in that time period and displayed only a 1-percentage point drop. These differential outcomes may point to challenges in course delivery due to the type of instructional method implemented for each student group. Students who were incarcerated in correctional facilities had courses converted from face-to-face to correspondence education²; however, formerly incarcerated students had the benefit of online instruction, which enabled greater interaction and engagement with instructors and classmates compared to correspondence courses.

Figure 4. Course Success Rates for Rising Scholars Students



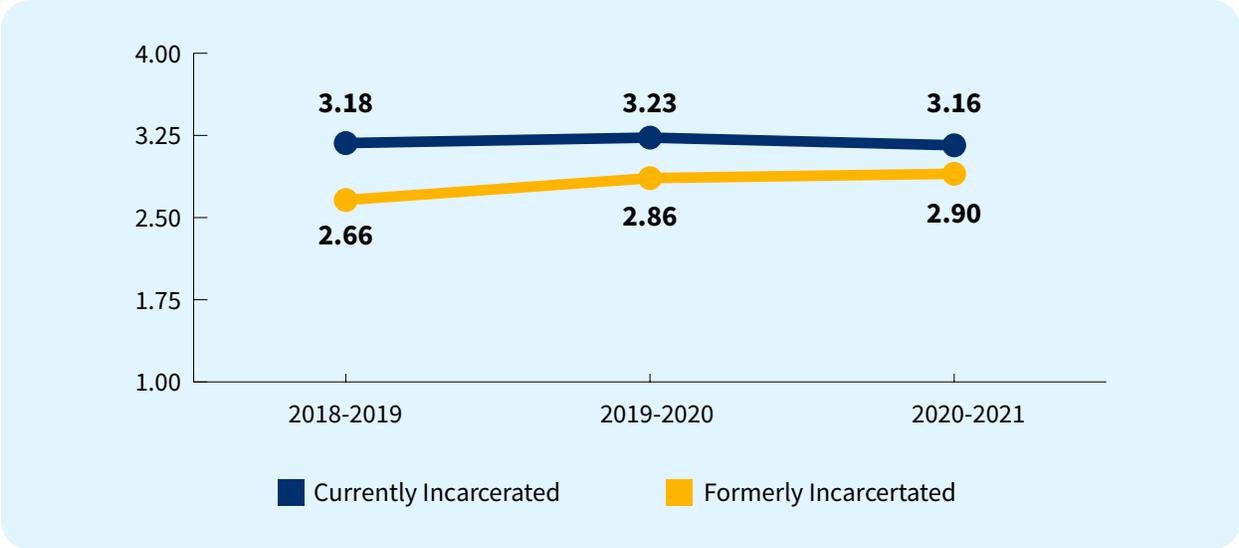
Rising Scholars students demonstrated improved course retention rates over the two-year period from 2018-2019 to 2021-2021. As Figure 5 displays, course retention rates increased 2 percentage points amongst incarcerated students, and 9 percentage points amongst formerly incarcerated students.

1 The number of students who earned a passing grade at the end of the term divided by the total number of students enrolled in the course.

2 Correspondence education is a part of distance learning that involves asynchronous courses where students are provided with materials via mail to learn at their own pace with limited interaction between them and the instructor.

While there was an overall net gain in course retention rates before and after colleges received the reentry grant, year-over-year retention rates did drop somewhat amongst Rising Scholars students in the second year following program implementation. Similar to course success rates, this decrease is likely due to the impact of the pandemic and transition to remote instruction stemming from the pandemic. As displayed in Figure 5, course retention rates for currently incarcerated students dropped by 2 percentage points from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, while formerly incarcerated students experienced a 3-percentage point drop in that same period.

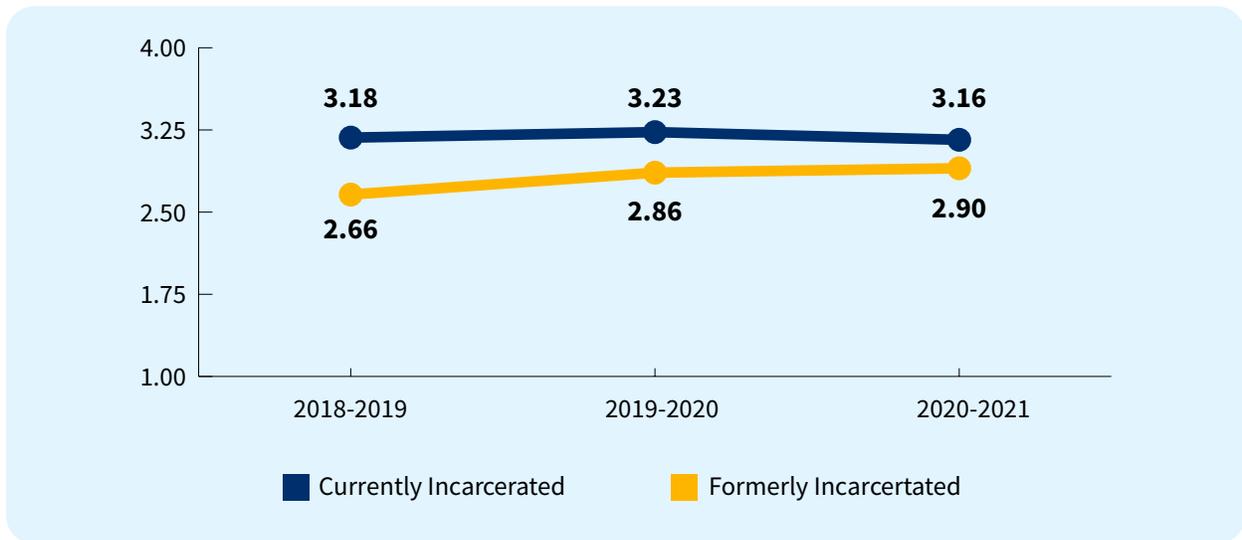
Figure 5. Grade Point Averages for Rising Scholar Students



Source: Chancellor’s Office Management Information System

Differences in academic performance were observed over the two-year period, indicating Rising Scholars students experienced positive benefits from their college’s participation in the program. As Figure 6 indicates, formerly incarcerated students achieved significantly higher grade point averages (GPAs) in 2021-2020 compared to 2018-2019, increasing from 2.66 to 2.90. GPAs amongst currently incarcerated students remained stable over the two-year period, going from 3.18 to 3.16; however, GPAs for this group did increase initially following program implementation in 2019-2020 from 3.18 to 3.23.

Figure 6. Average GPA



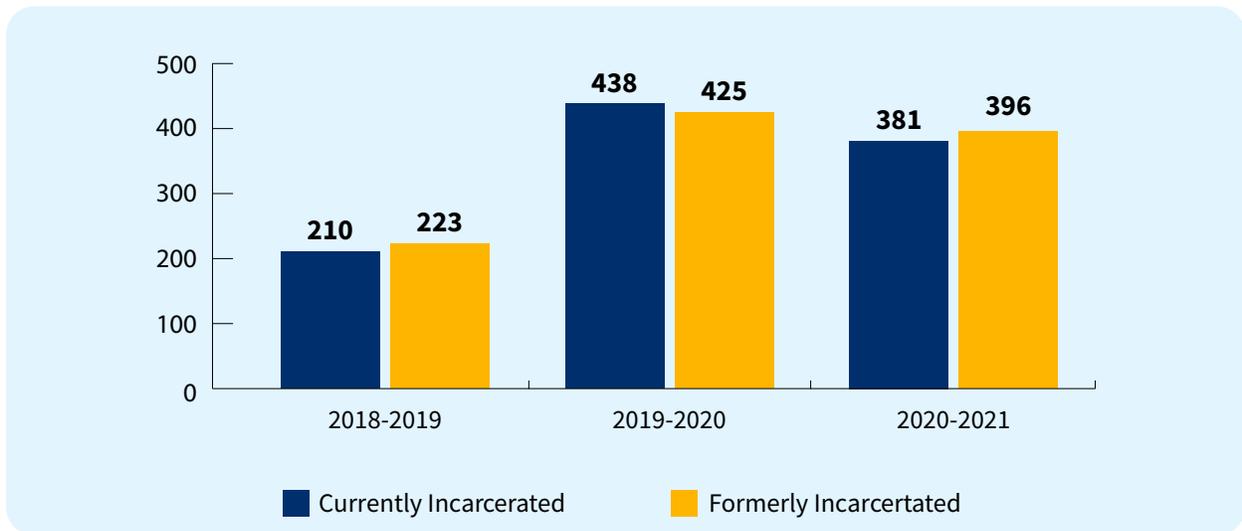
Source: Chancellor's Office Management Information System

LONG-TERM ACHIEVEMENT

To help ease the path to degree attainment for students interested in obtaining a two-year credential, colleges reported working to promote informed and appropriate program pathway goals to currently and formerly incarcerated students. As Figure 7 shows, the number of awards conferred to Rising Scholars students almost doubled in the two years following program implementation. From 2018-2019 to 2019-2020, the number of associate degrees awarded to currently incarcerated students increased from 210 to 438 (108%), while the number of associate degrees awarded to formerly incarcerated students increased from 223 to 425 (91%).

In the second year following implementation, the number of awards conferred to Rising Scholars students dropped slightly, possibly due to changes in course offerings and delivery related to the pandemic, which may have impacted students' ability to complete program requirements. From 2019-2020 to 2020-2021, the number of associate degrees awarded to currently incarcerated students decreased from 438 to 381 (13%), and the number of associate degrees awarded to formerly incarcerated students decreased from 425 to 396 (7%).

Figure 7. Degrees Awarded

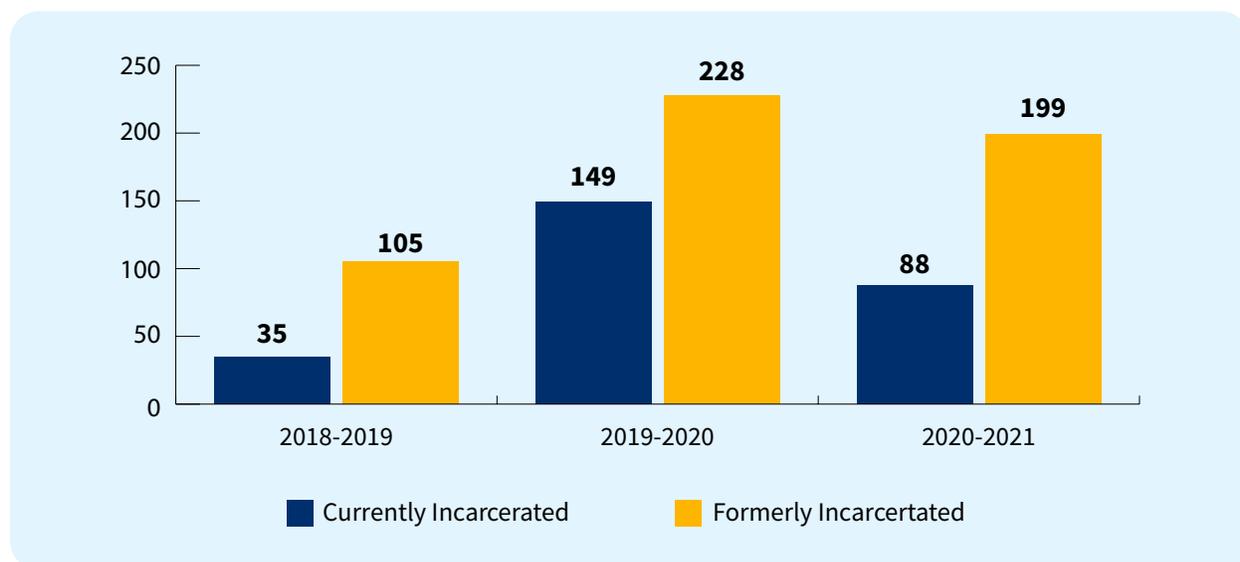


Source: Chancellor’s Office Management Information System

As Figure 8 illustrates, the number of certificates conferred to Rising Scholars students significantly increased from 2018-2019 to 2020-2021. In the first year following implementation, the number of certificates awarded to currently incarcerated students increased from 35 to 149 (292%), while the number of certificates awarded to formerly incarcerated students increased from 105 to 228 (117%).

In the second year following implementation, the number of certificates awarded to Rising Scholars students dropped, displaying a similar pattern to the number of associate degrees conferred. From 2019 2020 to 2020 2021, the number of certificates awarded to currently incarcerated students decreased from 149 to 88 (41%), and the number of certificates awarded to formerly incarcerated students decreased from 228 to 199 (13%), mostly attributed to the pandemic effects

Figure 8. Certificates Awarded



Source: Chancellor’s Office Management Information System

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

This section includes a demographic breakdown of Rising Scholars students based on statewide data extracted from the Chancellor’s Office Management Information System (COMIS) for the most recent term available at the time of the analysis (i.e., spring 2021). The sample included 7,267 currently incarcerated students and 2,068 formerly incarcerated students.

The majority of Rising Scholars students come from underrepresented groups that have historically experienced disproportionate impact. The following demographic data underscore the significant ethnic disparities amongst incarcerated individuals. The majority of students, both currently and formerly incarcerated, are people of color. As Table 10 displays, Hispanic/Latinx and African American/Black students comprise almost two-thirds of this population (62% of currently incarcerated and 60% of formerly incarcerated). In comparison, White students make up just under one-quarter (19% of currently incarcerated and 23% of formerly incarcerated).

Table 10. Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Currently Incarcerated	Formerly Incarcerated
African American/Black	20%	15%
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	1%
Asian	4%	5%
Hispanic/Latinx	42%	45%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1%	1%

Ethnicity	Currently Incarcerated	Formerly Incarcerated
Two or More Races	2%	6%
White	19%	23%
Unknown	11%	3%

Table 11. Gender

Gender	Currently Incarcerated	Formerly Incarcerated
Female	9%	45%
Male	90%	54%
Unknown	2%	1%

Table 12. Age

Age Group	Currently Incarcerated	Formerly Incarcerated
Under 18	0%	1%
18 - 24	9%	14%
25 - 29	17%	19%
30 - 39	35%	35%
40 - 49	24%	19%
50+	15%	12%
Unknown	0%	0%

Table 13. Educational Goal

Educational Goal	Currently Incarcerated	Formerly Incarcerated
AA/AS and transfer	40%	33%
AA/AS	13%	11%
Unknown	12%	4%
Educational development	10%	4%
Job preparation	7%	7%
Undecided	4%	11%
Career exploration	3%	3%

Educational Goal	Currently Incarcerated	Formerly Incarcerated
Improve English, reading, or math	2%	3%
HS diploma/GED	2%	3%
Transfer	2%	7%
Vocational degree and transfer	2%	8%
Advance in current career	1%	3%
Complete 4-year university requirements	1%	1%

Table 14. Key Findings by Evaluation Question

Evaluation Question	Key Findings
1. What types of activities, services, and training did colleges provide to support Rising Scholars students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, counselors and faculty assigned to directly support Rising Scholars students • Case-management approach to advising that includes direct outreach and one-on-one support
2. What are colleges doing to increase opportunity and access for currently incarcerated students and formerly incarcerated students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded the network of correctional facilities offering instruction to Rising Scholars students • Increased the number and type of programs and courses available to incarcerated students
3. How do colleges support student success, retention, and completion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wraparound services to support students on campus and in correctional facilities • Caring environment with faculty, staff and administrators who promote a growth mindset

Evaluation Question	Key Findings
4. How do colleges promote informed and appropriate pathway goals and objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with counselors and academic advisors for students to discuss educational goals and program offerings • Professional development opportunities to faculty and staff serving currently and formerly incarcerated students
5. What specifically did colleges provide to Rising Scholars students to support reentry into their communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with meeting students' basic needs to address housing and food insecurity • Direct outreach to incarcerated students prior to their release to discuss next steps
6. What steps have colleges taken to build sustainable programs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established relationships with local correctional facilities and community-based organizations • Increased the number of faculty and staff who support Rising Scholars students
7. How did the pandemic affect currently incarcerated students, formerly incarcerated students, and the program overall?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created instructional challenges as colleges were faced with transitioning all courses to remote learning • Exacerbated issues with students being able to meet basic needs
8. Were there any positive changes or innovations that took place due to COVID-19 that will continue beyond the pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising Scholars students were provided with Chromebooks, Internet hotspots, and other resources • Online course options enabled formerly incarcerated students to more flexible schedules so they could balance personal and academic responsibilities better

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation of the Rising Scholars reentry program revealed potential obstacles that may impede the continued success and advancement of college programming that supports currently and formerly incarcerated students. We must work as a collective system to address the ongoing needs identified throughout this report.

The following recommendations represent opportunities in which the Chancellor's Office, California Legislature, Department of Finance and correctional facilities can work together to support the implementation and long-term sustainability of programs that improve equitable outcomes for Rising Scholars students through the state:

- Provide flexible, long-term funding to all 116 California community colleges to create and maintain sustainable infrastructure that supports Rising Scholars students inside and outside the classroom.
- Continue funding the Chancellor's Office regional leads and support staff to oversee the grants and regulatory changes, facilitate statewide meetings, provide technical assistance, share best practices and provide professional development opportunities.
- Improve access to technology in correctional facilities to increase computer literacy, improve teaching and learning, and reduce disruptions in instruction caused by lockdowns and other factors that impact access.
- Align regulatory systems such that policies under the Penal Code and Education Code work in conjunction to support student success.
- Establish common goals and priorities between community colleges and correctional facilities to strengthen partnerships and incentivize cooperation.
- Identify primary points of contact across partner agencies, organizations and institutions to support coordination for educational programs to help colleges establish and deliver services more effectively.
- Ease the path to reentry by permitting the use of alternative forms of identification (e.g., authenticated release documentation) to apply for housing, employment, education and social services; reducing the number and type of required documents; providing assistance and waiving costs to obtain documents.
- Improve data collection and reporting processes to track and monitor program outcomes, evaluate the long-term impact on recidivism, and determine overall cost savings.
- Develop a better process for capturing how many community college students are actually system-impacted to improve access to needed resources and services and ensure adequate funds are allocated to account for the number of students served.
- Facilitate the development of an intersegmental data sharing agreement between CDCR and the California Community Colleges accompanied by a mechanism for tracking and reporting recidivism rates and long-term outcomes of Rising Scholars students.

CONCLUSION

Higher education has the power to transform lives. Creating opportunities for justice-involved students to access college courses can profoundly impact their future trajectory. Education can set in motion a new path not just for individual students but for entire families and future generations. Rising Scholars students' academic success and long-term achievement require a concerted effort from all constituencies in the state. Establishing shared goals and interests can improve the social and economic outcomes of currently and formerly incarcerated students.

Colleges in the reentry grant program are helping to reduce achievement gaps by increasing access to college coursework for historically marginalized students. This report presents the California Legislature and Department of Finance with a summary of the findings and data considerations that resulted from the evaluation study. Analyzing statewide student-level data in combination with the interview and survey findings provides a comprehensive examination of the success and efficacy of the reentry grant. The evaluation helped identify positive outcomes and shed light on challenges with program implementation and sustainability. Furthermore, the interviews uncovered opportunities to continue improving the supports available for Rising Scholars students. The results of this study can lead to a deeper understanding of the successes, challenges and ongoing needs of justice-involved students and the colleges that serve them.

Institutional and survey data, together with recommendations from colleges and partners that operate Rising Scholars programs, provide a compelling case to support the enhancement of and prioritization for the statewide program implementation efforts. California must continue to prioritize and advocate for access to higher education for justice-involved students. Through this collaboration, the coordination and delivery of educational programs and services for currently and formerly incarcerated students will have a powerful intergenerational impact on students, families, and communities.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

The lasting impression from my experience will be my new concept of success. Thanks to the community I found, I learned that achievements are earned by individuals, but success occurs when individuals apply their achievements to impact their environment in a meaningful way.

– Rising Scholars student

APPENDICES

The following items are included for reference:

- A. List of Colleges Participating in the Grant Reentry Program
- B. Rising Scholars Guiding Principles for Serving Incarcerated Students in Prisons
- C. Rising Scholars Guiding Principles for Serving Formerly Incarcerated Students
- D. Interview Protocol
- E. Survey Instrument
- F. Statewide Professional Development Related to Currently and Formerly Incarcerated Students

APPENDIX B: LIST OF COLLEGES PARTICIPATING IN THE GRANT REENTRY PROGRAM

Allan Hancock College	Los Angeles Trade Technical College
Butte College	Merced College
Cañada College	Modesto Junior College
Cerro Coso College	Norco College
Chabot College	Palomar College
Chaffey College	Pasadena City College
City College of San Francisco	Sacramento City College
Coastline College	San Diego City College
College of the Canyons	Santa Ana College
Columbia College	Santa Barbara City College
Compton College	Santa Rosa Junior College
Cosumnes River College	Santiago Canyon College
Cuesta College	Shasta College
Cuyamaca College	Solano Community College
East Los Angeles College	Southwestern College
El Camino College	Victor Valley College
Folsom Lake College	West Los Angeles College
Fresno City College	
Gavilan College	
Glendale College	
Grossmont College	
Hartnell College	
Imperial Valley College	
Laney College	
Lassen College	
Long Beach City College	
Los Angeles City College	

APPENDIX D: RISING SCHOLARS GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SERVING INCARCERATED STUDENTS IN PRISON



Rising Scholars
Network

SERVING STUDENTS INCARCERATED IN PRISON GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

The Advisory Committee believes that serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students is a critical matter of equity. Reaching and serving Rising Scholars students is within the mission of the California Community Colleges and aligns with Vision 2030. The Advisory Committee further recognizes that students in prison are situated differently from students on campus, as incarcerated students cannot freely explore and choose amongst the options offered on campus, nor can they freely move between the 116 community colleges.

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

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Identify a dedicated point person or team on campus to interact with the prison and to handle issues such as lockdown, scheduling, and clearances;
- Develop strong working relationships with prison staff responsible for coordinating educational programming. Connect with prison staff on a regular basis;
- Invest in Admissions and Records staff with sufficient time and training to promptly and accurately manage enrollment, adds and drops, grades, and other paperwork, recognizing that students in prison will often lack internet access and therefore must complete all paperwork in hard copy;
- Ensure that college MIS data accurately reflects the number of incarcerated students;
- Maximize instructor face-to-face interaction with students and prioritize offering face-to-face courses in the prisons located in the district whenever possible;
- If course delivery is via distance or correspondence, ensure at a minimum regular instructor feedback, adherence to these Guiding Principles, and compliance with Title

5 regulations defining distance and correspondence;

- Develop campus procedures and guidelines to ensure that different college instructors and staff treat incarcerated students consistently, including procedures and guidelines about writing letters for the parole board and about providing materials and supplies to students;
- Develop procedures and guidelines about in-person interactions between students and college faculty or staff. Train faculty and staff about the unintended negative consequences that may fall on the student if college faculty or staff have in-person, private interactions with a student;
- Promptly provide students and prison staff with documentation needed for milestones or other prison administrative or programmatic processes;
- Respond to transcript requests including those that arrive by regular mail as quickly as possible;
- Safeguard academic freedom by ensuring that the college and college faculty determine curriculum, course content, academic progression, and course selection.

CLARIFY THE PATH

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

ENTER THE PATH

- Walk students through enrollment and completion of the California College Promise Grant application, in-person whenever feasible;
- Be aware of access barriers that arise when the college requires supporting documentation that incarcerated men and women cannot provide. Work with Admissions and Records and Financial Aid to ensure that incarcerated students are able to enroll and receive financial aid;

- Provide individualized academic planning and counseling for each student, in-person whenever feasible and without undue obstacles or hurdles;
- Ensure that incarcerated students have the information they need to request transcripts, including a means by which to request transcripts by regular mail as incarcerated students usually cannot make an online request.

STAY ON THE PATH

- Whenever possible, provide student advising, counseling, tutoring and other support services in-person;
- Run degree audits or equivalent on a regular basis and inform students about their progress;
- Encourage faculty to utilize Open Educational Resources to avoid charging students or their families for textbooks. Take advantage of any available funding to cover textbooks before looking to students or their families. If non-OER textbooks are required, create a textbook library or other system to re-use books;
- Recognize that incarcerated students are unable to earn an income like students in the community, which means that students' families carry a high burden to pay for telephone, toiletries, and other basic student needs. Avoid adding to the burden by waiving health, parking, and other similar campus fees for incarcerated students and not charging students for materials or supplies whenever possible;
- Enable students to make informed decisions about their education, recognizing that incarcerated students cannot freely access outside resources to educate themselves, so the college carries an additional burden to provide information to the student;
- Whenever possible, work with prison staff to identify students who are being transferred to another prison prior to degree completion. Reach out to the colleges serving the new institution. Give the student a copy of their unofficial transcript and ensure that the student knows which classes they need for degree completion. Reach out to the colleges serving the new institution for a warm hand-off and to keep the student on track to degree;
- Prepare students for success when they return home, especially if they return home prior to degree completion. Provide unofficial transcripts without charge. Ensure that students nearing release know how to continue their education. Provide college names and contact information for colleges near the student's home, and aid in supporting a warm hand-off between colleges.

ENSURE LEARNING

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

APPENDIX E: RISING SCHOLARS GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SERVING FORMERLY INCARCERATED STUDENTS



Rising Scholars
Network

SERVING FORMERLY INCARCERATED STUDENTS GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

The Advisory Committee believes that serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students is a critical matter of equity. Reaching and serving Rising Scholars students is within the mission of the California Community Colleges and aligns with Vision 2030. The Advisory Committee further recognizes that formerly incarcerated students have great capacity to succeed in the California Community Colleges and that they, as with all students, deserve the best that the California Community Colleges have to offer.

In support of the pursuit of excellence for all California community college students, the Rising Scholars Advisory Committee adopts the following principles to guide colleges as they exercise their local control to serve formerly incarcerated students on campus:

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Build a student-centered support program that relies on student feedback to identify needs and priorities;
- Hire qualified staff, including whenever possible staff with personal or family experience with the criminal justice system;
- Advocate for campus diversity, equity, and inclusion, including that found by hiring faculty and staff with lived criminal justice experience;
- Identify faculty and staff who can advocate for the program and the students in the Academic Senate and in other campus committees and offices;
- Seek a designated and sufficient space on campus with a door that closes to protect students' identities if they have not yet chosen to be public about their status;
- Collect data about the number of students and services provided; ensure that the college's MIS data about the number of Rising Scholars students is accurate. Build trust relationships with students so they are willing to disclose their status and they

understand who can access the data and why data collection is needed. Respect the wishes of students who do not wish to disclose.

- Work towards program sustainability. Align program goals with existing college and district goals including Guided Pathways, the Vision 2030 and other institutionalized efforts to better serve students. Partner with existing campus programs such as Guardian Scholars that share a similar equity focus. Seek sustainable funding including Equity and general fund rather than relying on grant funding. Work with the Academic Senate and campus administration on resolutions that acknowledge a commitment to Rising Scholars students

CLARIFY THE PATH

- Seek new students through outreach to reentry programs, community organizations, transitional housing facilities, probation, parole, juvenile detention centers, court schools, adult schools and county jails;
- Identify a program point of contact who can be reached via multiple means including electronically and in person. Ensure that program contact information is updated, public and easily accessible by students and potential students;
- Ensure that potential students know to ask for the program when they arrive on campus. Educate frontline or first-contact campus staff about the program and develop a process for a warm hand-off to the program rather than relying on referrals;
- If students' initial or only interaction with the college will be online rather than in person, create a means by which students can link to Rising Scholars support resources at the beginning of the process;
- Create ways for students to find the Rising Scholars program without first disclosing their history to strangers;
- If possible, offer dual enrollment opportunities for youth involved in the county's juvenile justice system including youth in juvenile detention centers and court schools, and align transition services onto campus for the students; and
- If possible, offer orientations, programming, or courses in the local county jail and juvenile justice system, and align transition services onto campus for the students.

ENTER THE PATH

- Walk students through the admissions and enrollment process. Connect students via a warm hand-off with trusted contacts in campus departments including financial aid, admissions and records, and academic and career counseling;
- Connect Rising Scholars students with other campus programs that may be available to them including EOPS, Guardian Scholars, Puente, Umoja and veterans services;

- Lead professional development for faculty and staff to break down misunderstandings and prejudices; have students lead or provide guidance on these trainings if possible;
- Award credit for prior learning to students who took career education courses while incarcerated or detained whenever possible;
- Ensure all students, especially those new to higher education, that they are informed about academic decisions that have consequences such as the W, and academic opportunities such as scholarships and honor societies; and
- Foster peer-to-peer introductions between new and existing Rising Scholars students.

STAY ON THE PATH

- Be proactive about student engagement and support. Affirmatively reach out to students who lose contact with the program or who miss classes or coursework. Take extra steps to find the student and see if they can be supported as soon as the student begins to lose contact or miss class;
- Establish a highly coordinated proactive approach to student and academic support services;
- Keep students on track to degree or certificate completion; engage students in a degree audit on a regular basis so students know where they are and what they need;
- Create structured opportunities for peer connections and peer mentoring within the program;
- Seek funding to offer paid student positions for peer mentorship and program leadership;
- Work with campus Human Resources, Financial Aid, and other departments to open work study and other campus employment opportunities for Rising Scholars students;
- Incorporate dedicated mental health supports into the program, potentially through campus mental health staff, community resources, or nearby MSW or other graduate students;
- Incorporate dedicated tutoring services or find campus or community partners who can offer comprehensive tutoring;
- Create community partnerships to address the students' unique needs such as expungement;
- Educate program staff and career counselors about career barriers such as licensing restrictions, or find a community partner who is knowledgeable about the barriers;

- Build a trust relationship with local probation and parole offices so that students are supported in their educational pursuits by their probation officer or parole agent;
- Advise students to attend office hours and build relationships with their instructors; and
- Create a continuous feedback loop between program staff and students to ensure that the program adapts and responds to changing student needs.

ENSURE LEARNING

- Amplify student voices on campus, remaining mindful to avoid having students “perform their poverty” and compensating students for telling their stories whenever possible; elevating the student voice should serve not to exploit the student’s experiences but to empower students to share their knowledge as experts, leaders and change agents;
- Incorporate a resiliency framework rather than a deficit model; focus on students’ capacity for
- positive growth rather than punitive responses to students who are struggling;
- Use professional development and other avenues to educate faculty and staff about opportunities to support Rising Scholars students in the classroom and on campus, including the challenges that may be unique to students on parole or probation;
- Avoid limiting students’ options or allowing others to lower expectations because of the students’ history;
- Be proactive about supporting students’ technology needs and gaps, as students with incarceration histories may face additional hurdles, lack technology access and have knowledge gaps;
- Become familiar with the college’s campus police department or other agency that may be hired for campus policing. Work with campus administration to build a community where Rising Scholars students are welcomed on campus and campus police encourage and support Rising Scholars students;
- Encourage students to participate in student government and other leadership opportunities. Build the foundation for Rising Scholars students to become leaders on campus and in the community.

Front cover photo:
College of the Redwoods Pelican
Bay Prison Program

Photo at right:
El Camino College

Back cover photo:
College of the Redwoods Pelican
Bay Prison Program



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