

Advancing Postsecondary Success for Justice-Impacted Students

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State Higher Education
Executive Officers Association

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Agenda

- Postsecondary Access for Justice-Impacted Students
- Federal Momentum
- SHEEO-Vera Partnership
- Learning Community
- RFP Process and Rubric
- Questions



Benefits of Postsecondary Access for Justice-Impacted Students

- Of the 1.9 million-plus people in U.S. carceral systems combined as of October 2024, more than 750,000 are eligible for postsecondary enrollment
- Benefits of education for reentry and reintegration are well-established and broadly recognized
- Review of first year of Pell restoration attests to favorable impact for all groups, but especially individuals in rural jails, aged 55+, and people of color
- However, Pell restoration and student eligibility are not sufficient to ensure success when policy barriers remain



Promise of Prison Education Programs

- Fundamental to social mobility, state priorities of equitable attainment, and economic and workforce development
- As prison populations disproportionately come from low-income communities, investments in education and skills offer economic benefits for participants and society at large
- Prison education programs reduce recidivism, improve post-release employment prospects, and facilitate long-term socioeconomic mobility for enrollees

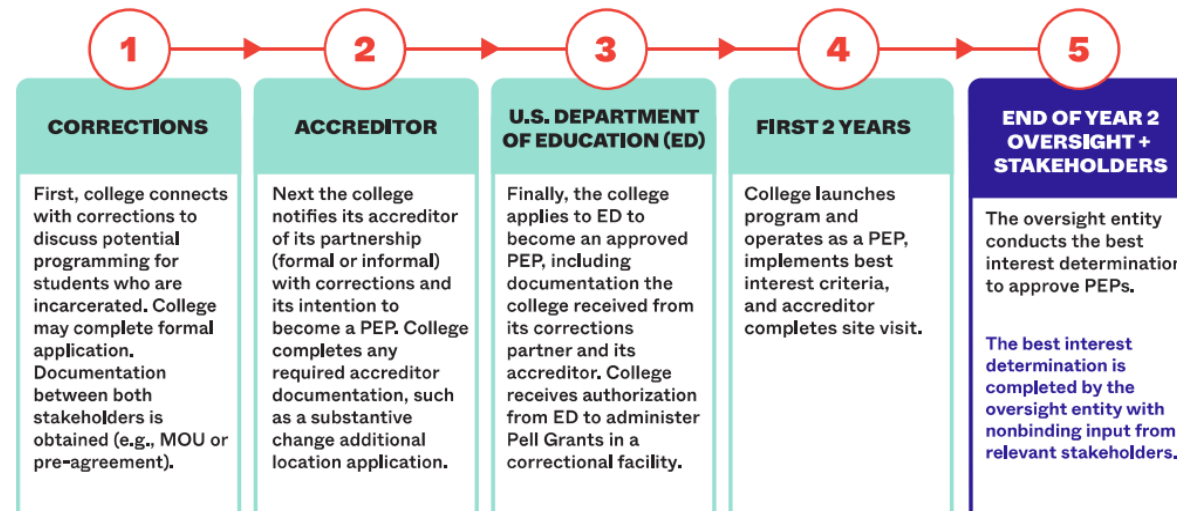


Key Stakeholders in Promoting Postsecondary Access

- Federal law requires oversight entities to work with stakeholders to create approval process, select colleges, and evaluate compliance
- State licensing boards, workforce boards, and institutions are crucial
- Accrediting agencies and organizations representing currently and formerly incarcerated students
- State higher education executive offices are mandatory stakeholders

FIGURE 1.

The prison education program (PEP) eligibility process



Federal Momentum on Postsecondary Access for Justice-Impacted Students

- Pell Grants extended to incarcerated populations in in late 2020 through legislation signed by President Trump, implemented in July 2023
- As of December 2024 (latest numbers), there are 64 federally-approved PEP programs in the following states:
 - CA, CO, IL, KY, LA, MA, ME, MI, NE, NY, OH, OR, VT
- It remains unclear if and how PEP growth and administration will be affected by the U.S. Department of Education's Reduction in Force (RIF)
- To date, the Trump Administration has not laid out an agenda on PEP or changes to the program
- Eligibility changes to Pell Grants could be approved in the months ahead, as the program faces a \$2.7 billion shortfall and bigger shortfalls in the years ahead

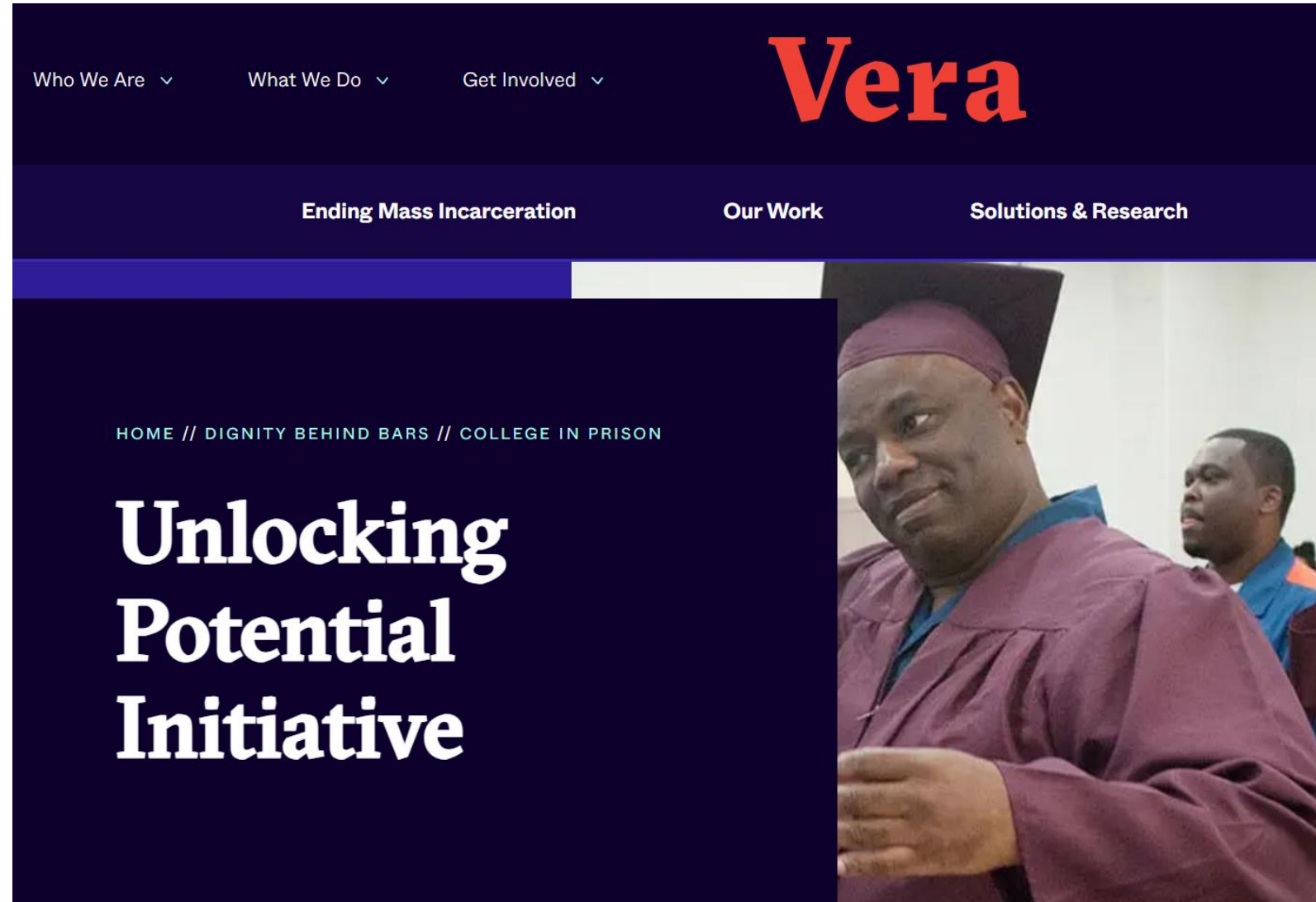


SHEEO-Vera Partnership

- The Vera Institute of Justice, SHEEO's partner in this project, is a leading national organization advocating to end over-criminalization and mass incarceration
- Learning community will offer technical assistance to state-level key stakeholders in implementing prison education programs in their states
- SHEEO's 2020 report *Postsecondary Education for Incarcerated Individuals: Guidance for State Agencies and Systems of Higher Education* will guide recommendations for SHEEOs to improve incarcerated student access and success



Vera Institute of Justice's Impact



Advancing Postsecondary Success for Justice-Impacted Students Learning Community

- One-year, learning community for up to six states committed to strengthening education opportunities for incarcerated learners
- Activities will focus on:
 - Fostering collaboration between higher education institutions and corrections agencies
 - Removing barriers to access
 - Strengthening program quality and alignment with workforce opportunities
 - Supporting state action planning to grow and sustain prison education programs
 - Incorporating the live experiences of justice-impacted students in shaping state strategies and solutions



Advancing Postsecondary Success for Justice-Impacted Students Learning Community

- Launch seven-part webinar series that will highlight best practices and case studies to support policy development and implementation
- Develop and deliver technical assistance through weekly interactions with state teams as well as a multi-state convening and the 2025 SHEEO Policy Conference
- SHEEO and Vera will develop a final public-facing webinar summarizing actionable recommendations



Request for Proposals (RFP) Process and Rubric

- RFP opened last week (April 21st)
- RFP is due on May 5th by 5 pm ET
- Selected states will be announced by May 12th
- The RFP seeks and assesses responses on the four topic areas that will inform learning community activities
 - Description of current or planned efforts to support postsecondary education for incarcerated students
 - How this project aligns with current state-level postsecondary, workforce, or public safety goals, and what complementary policies, programs, or initiatives could support implementation
 - Any existing or prior collaboration between higher education agency and corrections agencies, institutional partners, or other stakeholders
 - Key barriers faced in expanding or supporting prison education programs, and opportunities for success through this project



Upcoming Deadlines and Q&A

- SAVE THE DATES
 - RFP Opens: 4/21
 - RFP Due: 5/6 at 5 pm ET
 - State Announcement: 5/12
 - Individual Meetings for Selected State Teams: 5/14
 - Kick-Off Webinar for Selected States: 5/29

