

College in Prison

I couldn't have been happier to hear there would be a college-level intro to psych class being offered. When I saw it posted I immediately submitted my application for enrollment. I've been interested in psychology for several years now, but unfortunately I don't have the means to put myself through school. This class has only increased my interest and shown me that psychology is a robust area of study well worth pursuing.

I've been incarcerated for 14 years and am slated to be released [in the next few years]. I came to prison as a 19 year old with no education, having dropped out of high school in the ninth grade. I got my GED in 2006 through the prison, and a few years ago I snuck my way into a computer applications class (CMAP) that was offered through Eastern Wyoming College. Other than that, I haven't had a single educational opportunity until this intro to psych class came along. Due to my sentence structure and inability to afford higher education, it is likely that I will leave prison after having served nearly 20 years without a single employable skill.

The idea of college has always intimidated me, and this class has shown me that I don't need to be intimidated. The professors were kind and professional, and they didn't even have to bribe me to say so! Having taken this class I'd be much more apt to apply for grants or go to campus and discuss my educational future with someone. It means a lot that people are willing to take the time to teach me something when the only thing they know about me is I committed some crime they would certainly disapprove of.

Not to sound ungrateful—because I couldn't possibly be any more appreciative—but we definitely need more programs like this. If pursuing a degree were possible when I arrived, I would probably have a master's degree by now, perhaps even two. Although it's too late for *me* to get a degree in prison, that shouldn't deter you too much from advocating that others should be educated before being released. The science on the inverse correlation between recidivism and education has been known for some time now. Prison reform has to start somewhere; why not here?

Perhaps I can speak for most of us when I say we definitely want more educational opportunities and will take full advantage of any opportunities we're given. Most of us lost everything we have on our way into prison and now make pennies an hour (literally). We can't afford to put ourselves through school, so anything the community can do to help us I'm sure will show increased returns. Thank you for listening.

The value of an education is beyond measure especially to those who have very little access to it. I've had the opportunity to participate in two college courses in prison through the Pathways program. The biggest gain I've had from this opportunity is that it has given me hope. Hope that I can be a better person and make better choices, hope that I can do something positive with my life, and hope that I can do and be something more than someone who has completely failed at life. The Pathways program has given us the opportunity to receive an education and a desire to change. Change is something not easily done alone and thanks to Dr. Dewey and the volunteer professors' willingness to give of their time I know have the desire and chance to make some right choices in my life. Someday some of us will leave these walls and having the drive and knowledge we have gained will help us as we are now better prepared to be successful and hopefully productive citizens. This advanced education is essential for rehabilitation and can create a safer prison environment, reduce recidivism, and help ex-cons become relevant contributors to society. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be more than I ever imagined I could be.



To whom it may concern,

I am an inmate in the Wyoming Department of Corrections in the Medium Institution located in Torrington, WY. I have been involved in every course that has been offered within this facility absent the current Psychology course and the only reason is because that course was full.

The first class offered here only had 12 people in a facility containing around 700 incarcerated people. The only 12 that actually signed up wanting to take the class. Now after 3 successful courses offered here there have been a lot more people interested causing a snowball effect gaining a lot more interest. Currently there are two classes that are being facilitated one AM Psychology course and one PM Autobiography class. Both courses actually had people be turned away due to lack of space which is awesome showing that these courses are making a positive impact within these walls.

These courses have allowed me to further my education and to help keep my mind sharp and focused. I will continue furthering my education with every opportunity that is presented because a person can never stop learning new things. That is one of the most wonderful and amazing things about a person's brain. There are two types of convicts within these facilities. The first is the type that comes to prison with the intention of learning to become a better convict and wastes their time and resources because they like this life. Then there is the other which is people that don't ever want to come back and utilize every opportunity presented in order to make best use of one's time and resources in the hopes of never coming back.

I would like to encourage anyone that is willing to either donate funds, resources or more importantly time to help facilitate more classes. One thing that would be greatly beneficial would be able to start teaching the core classes and pre-requisites. These classes could eventually be inmate taught once they have been established with the proper resources.

Most importantly I want to thank each and every volunteer or donor that has helped make these opportunities available and I look forward to your generosity and using those resources to help myself and encourage others as well. This is a positive and very productive thing and RAND Corp studies have shown that higher education results in lower recidivism.

The trope 'music soothes the savage beast' is ubiquitously common because it is relative to our humanity; if it applied only to the animal kingdom in a literal sense we probably wouldn't care much about it. The saying indicates that it is something uniquely human, such as music, which can dissuade the violence and ambivalence of nature, even in the human beast. I believe this sentiment to be fundamentally true. The arts have the capacity to bring even the most uncouth of us back into the human fold and this spectrum of education is sorely lacking in our corrective institutions today. The arts allow those who have been ostracized to be reacquainted with the variety, compassion, and largess of humanity; which despite the best attempts of the world to degrade, do still exist. The internal reckoning and the endeavor to make our internal selves understood by others works as a two way communication in which the process of communication reveals the connection between the creator and the audience; suggesting what is important, our shared humanity. There are men here who would take a bullet for a friend and also have no compunction about robbing someone else of their livelihood. Why? Because the human connection that they feel for the friend is not there for the potential victim, they are the other and only through establishing an understanding of our common humanity can this disconnection be remedied. The arts are the only path to this reconciliation, so I am thankful to have had the opportunity to participate in this class and I deeply appreciate the intent.

To whom it concerns,

Having college courses available for inmates at WMDI is very important & extremely appreciated. In prison it is easy to fall into a sense of worthlessness & disconnect from the world outside these walls. For me personally being incarcerated has led to low self-worth, depression, & loss of direction & motivation.

The opportunity & privilege to participate in educational courses combats all the negative feelings we experience daily. These courses give inmates who feel rejected from the world a connection back to society.

These courses give us the chance to learn new things & develop our own personal skills. There is a great self-confidence boost when we are able to complete these courses having actually achieved something valuable. These courses bring back a lost sense of purpose that develops during the incarceration process.

I consistently look forward to each new course that comes available each semester & gives me something to look forward to & a reason to stay out of trouble so I can participate in the classes.

Education is very important & these classes also bring different inmates together building new friendships that may not have happened. I am also able to hear others perspectives on concerns or beliefs I have that I most likely wouldn't have otherwise.

These classes have also stimulated outside group conversations about other fields of education. The desire to consume more education have moved like a virus throughout the prison encouraging others to seek out educational sources.

Each class I participate in here at WMCJ has been enlightening & productive. These courses are very important to me & allow me the platform to express myself in a safe place & learn so much. I have received more from the these opportunities than I have back when I was at university.

The inmates who sign up from these classes are eager & responsive to learning. With all of benefits that come from these classes inmates are given a part of our lives back we lost. I feel re-humanized in these classes after consistently feeling de-humanized throughout my incarceration. I am not treated as an animal, but a real student who is worth something.

I cannot express the gratitude I have for having these classes available to us. They have become a beneficial escape from the frustrations of daily life as an inmate. During these classes are one of the very few times I feel alive & like myself again. Each class brings a new adventure & another opportunity to expand my mind.

I feel like these classes have given me back my voice & giving me back the motivation to keep moving forward in becoming the person I know I can be. Plain & simple these classes have brought life back to men who've forgotten how to live.

Thank You!