

A Resolution in Support of Formerly Incarcerated & System Impacted Students Creating a Prison-to-School Pipeline

WHEREAS, formerly incarcerated students and/or students affected by the carceral system experience great difficulty achieving post-secondary educational opportunities upon release due to “inconsistent articulation agreements” and are not given [full] credits for the same work and programs equivalent versus students not affected by the carceral system¹

WHEREAS, there is a 43% reduction in recidivism associated with educational programs for those in the carceral system, and 51% lower odds of recidivism for college programs²;

WHEREAS, education remains almost completely inaccessible to 2.3 million incarcerated individuals and even when it is available, individuals continue to be constrained in access to quality postsecondary paths³;

WHEREAS, in 1990 there were about 350 active in-prison college programs, and by 2005 this dropped to only 12 as a result of the 1994 Crime Bill, which cut federal grant eligibility for these programs. The number of college degree-granting programs was considered inaccessible in the 1990s and still is today⁴;

WHEREAS, In just three years, California has gone from offering face-to-face college in one prison to full-credit degree-building college courses in 34 of 35 prisons at all security levels⁵. Almost 4,500 unique students are enrolled in these face-to-face college pathways each semester, and they consistently outperform students on campus. Critically, more than 95% of those in prison and jail will come home; California public colleges and universities have expanded opportunities for individuals impacted by the carceral system, in large part due to SB 1392 from 2014. Reentry college programs for these new students have expanded from one to nine California State University campuses, and from fewer than ten to almost 40 community colleges⁶;

WHEREAS, CA SB 1391 [2014] Allowed California community colleges to offer in-person courses in state prison, and to be fully reimbursed for both credit and noncredit courses taught in prison and jails as if those courses were offered on local college campuses⁷;

¹ <https://lincs.ed.gov/professional-development/resource-collections/profile-190>

² <https://correctionstocollegeca.org/assets/general/RC-Two-Page-4-24-17.pdf>

³ [University of Utah Prison Education Project 2017](#)

⁴ [Getting Back on Course: Educational exclusion and attainment among formerly incarcerated people](#)

⁵ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB1391

⁶ https://correctionstocollegeca.org/assets/general/dont-stop-now-report_v2.pdf

⁷ [Mukamal, Silbert & Taylor, 2016, p119](#)

WHEREAS, Prop 57 [2016] Allowed increasing parole and early release for good behaviors, education, and rehabilitation for individuals convicted of “nonviolent” crimes, with the goal of using education credit to incentivize academic involvement while incarcerated⁸;

WHEREAS, the Second Chance Pell Grant [2014] instated the Pell Grant to incarcerated individuals at 67 colleges and universities, providing access to higher education under a pilot program from the Obama administration with the authority of the Higher Education Act. However, it did not remove the ban on Federal Pell Grant aid instituted by Congress⁹ with the passing of the Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act of 1994¹⁰;

WHEREAS, the Pell Grant and other federal student loans continue to remain almost totally inaccessible to incarcerated individuals. Federal aid eligibility is also completely revoked for students who previously received aid and are later convicted of drug offenses or are involuntarily civilly committed for sex offenses¹¹;

WHEREAS, the widespread use of criminal history questions on college applications, very clearly deters potential students from completing their applications, in addition to the general discrimination and prejudice faced by individuals throughout the whole application process;

WHEREAS, the emphasis on disclosing criminal history prevents incarcerated people from furthering their post-secondary education or pursuing occupational licenses where individuals’ previous skills/training/qualifications are invalidated based on restrictions because of carceral history;

WHEREAS, students who are currently incarcerated have noted the stressful barriers they encountered when attempting to apply to UCLA, as well as facing difficulties with Financial Aid, such as being prohibited from receiving certain scholarships and Cal Grants¹²;

WHEREAS, in 2016, a group of formerly incarcerated and system-impacted (FISI) students at UCLA created a student group called the Underground Scholars Initiative (USI). Continuous student advocacy later led to the implementation of the Bruin Underground Scholars program in 2019;¹³

⁸ [Ballotpedia, 2018](#)

⁹ <https://www.vera.org/newsroom/u-s-house-of-representatives-votes-to-lift-the-ban-on-pell-grants-for-people-in-prison>

¹⁰ [Wexler, 2016: Prisoners to Get 'Second Chance Pell'](#)

¹¹ [Getting Back on Course: Educational exclusion and attainment among formerly incarcerated people](#)

¹² https://csac.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/state_financial_aid_resources.pdf

¹³ <https://undergroundscholars.ucla.edu/>

WHEREAS, the Underground Scholars Initiative (USI), focuses on recruitment and advocacy for students who identify as system impacted and/or formerly incarcerated, primarily through outreaching to prospective students with annual statewide chapters' Transfer Empowerment Workshops¹⁴;

WHEREAS, the Underground Scholars Initiative's Transfer Empowerment Workshops provide transfer advising and one-on-one support to currently and formerly incarcerated community college students who are interested in transferring to a four-year institution;

WHEREAS, Savannah Ramirez, a Graduate Research Assistant and Underground Scholar earning her masters in Public Policy at UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, organized Letter Writing actions to address the inhumane conditions of the carceral system. Savannah and the Underground Scholars worked in solidarity with Dr. Nicolas Shapiro from the Institute of Society and Genetics, RECH Foundation in Mississippi, and Revolutionary Scholars at CSUN.

WHEREAS, after almost 100 years, formerly incarcerated students at UCLA see the first graduating class in 2017;¹⁵

WHEREAS, the Bruin Underground Scholars Program was institutionalized in 2019 after five years of advocacy from the Underground Scholars Initiative for resources and space.

WHEREAS, the Bruin Underground Scholars Program is staffed by a part-time Director whose time commitment to the program is only 20%, one graduate student from the Luskin School of Public Affairs two undergraduate students from USI, and therefore currently lacks the required space and staff to serve this growing community;

WHEREAS, UCLA has failed to provide support and staff members who are familiar with the needs of formerly incarcerated students;

WHEREAS, UCLA has failed to keep formerly incarcerated and/or system impacted students safe on campus, leading to them continuously being targeted and interrogated by campus police.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that UCLA Admissions implement a program in collaboration with California community colleges who are participating in the Corrections to College California program¹⁶ and the guidance and input of the Underground Scholars Initiative

¹⁴ [USI Transfer Empowerment Workshop](#)

¹⁵ <https://dailybruin.com/2017/06/11/student-group-for-formerly-incarcerated-sees-first-graduating-class>

¹⁶ <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/What-we-do/Currently-and-Formerly-Incarcerated-Students>

student organization, to make transfer workshops accessible to students who are currently incarcerated.

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that UCLA provides additional financial assistance to formerly incarcerated and/or system impacted parenting students who may not qualify for federal financial aid due to their FISl status.

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that UCLA provides additional financial assistance to formerly incarcerated and/or system impacted students to enable communication with partners and/or family members who are currently incarcerated.

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that UCLA works with Underground Scholars Initiative to appoint a liaison in Admissions, Financial Aid & Scholarships, Account Services and who is well informed with the issues of the formerly incarcerated student community and can advocate on their behalf. The liaison should be informed on issues including the process of transferring with credits/classes earned while incarcerated, applying to financial aid as someone with a conviction(s), paroling while being a student, and other barriers/challenges [formerly incarcerated and/or system impacted] students face in their eligibility/requirements while applying to [a/several] four-year institution(s).

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that UCLA allocates appropriate community and office space for the Bruins Underground Scholars Program to meet the needs of the program in cultivating a healthy community and pathway for incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and system impacted individuals. The office space should provide 1) a social hub 2) enclosed meeting rooms immediately adjacent to work areas that provide a private space for students and staff and 3) the ability for incoming students and/ or visitors to network and learn more about the program's work on campus. These areas will be integrated within open space to promote meaningful dialogue in the UCLA community.

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that UCLA appoints a case management team to better support Bruin Underground Scholars. The case management team will advocate for student's needs and services like any other students on campus, ensuring FISl students are offered basic needs, educational support, counseling services, etc. If no services are offered on campus, off-campus referrals should be made to meet student needs.

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that Student Affairs and the Bruin Resource Center (BRC) support and collaborate with the Bruins Underground Scholars Program and the Underground Scholars Initiative to support a full-time position for director in the Bruin Underground Scholars Program.

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that the Bruin Resource Center, under the Student Affairs Department, supports students in the Bruin Underground Scholars Program and Underground Scholars Initiative student organization to be involved in the process of reviewing applications and interviewing candidates for potential full-time Program Director who is familiar and identifies with formerly incarcerated and/or system impacted communities.

LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED, that the UCLA Undergraduate Student Association supports the formerly incarcerated and system impacted student community by reaffirming their demands and calling upon the University to adopt a prison-to-school pipeline system, reinforcing the institutional mission of providing equitable access to higher education.