THE JOHN JAY COLLEGE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY

ANNUAL REPORT: FISCAL YEARS 2020 AND 2021





JOHN JAY COLLEGE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY

A center of research and action, **the John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity** creates opportunities for people to live successfully in the community after involvement with the criminal legal system. Capitalizing on our position within the City University of New York (CUNY) and recognizing the transformational power of education, we focus much of our work on increasing access to higher education and career pathways for people with conviction histories. We also invest in the development of professionals and systems that better serve the interests of justice and opportunity for people who come into contact with the criminal legal system. Our comprehensive and strategic approach includes direct service, research, technical assistance, training, and policy advocacy.

Please note that we use the phrase "criminal legal system" throughout this report rather than "criminal justice system." Omitting the word "justice" reflects the growing acknowledgment that our systems of criminalization, policing, prosecution, and punishment are not always "just." Instead, these systems more accurately involve legal practice, so we adopt terminology that describes just that.

Letter from the Executive Director, Ann Jacobs



Ann Jacobs Executive Director

Dear Friends:

The John Jay College Institute of Justice and Opportunity is pleased to share this report on our activities over the last two fiscal years. This was an incredibly challenging period, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, political turmoil, and the burgeoning demand for racial justice in response to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and far too many others.

The work of the Institute has always been to address the legacy of slavery and systemic racism reflected in the disproportionate incarceration of people of color. Everything we do—our direct service, policy advocacy, and research is grounded in eliminating barriers and creating pathways to opportunity for people who have been involved in the criminal legal system. We have also committed ourselves to the self-examination and work needed to more fully realize ourselves as an anti-racist organization.

In 2020, we celebrated our fifteenth anniversary by changing our name from the Prisoner Reentry Institute to the John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity, a name that embraces possibility and better reflects the scope of our work and values. We are proud to be a center of John Jay College, an institution committed to educating fierce advocates for justice, and part of the City University of New York (CUNY), the largest urban public university system and a transformative engine of social mobility, whose mission is to provide a public first-rate education to all students, regardless of means or background.

Consistent with the mission and values of John Jay and CUNY, the Institute builds pathways from corrections to CUNY; equips practitioners to excel in careers in human services, community justice and policy advocacy; and changes systems to eliminate barriers and create access to opportunity.

We center the voices of our students and directly impacted people in our projects, and we are honored to be part of a community of stakeholders equally committed to justice and opportunity. We create our projects in consultation and collaboration with our colleagues in government and non-profit agencies, CUNY, and other institutions of higher education. We seek to define the unique contribution that is ours to make and to identify opportunities to elevate, integrate, and complement the work of our colleagues to produce more collective impact.

We hope this report offers you a glimpse into our work and prompts you to consider ways that, together, we can do more to achieve real justice and opportunity for people who have been denied. We thank you for your support and partnership.

Thank you,

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Acknowledgments

The John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity would like to express our sincere gratitude for the leadership and support of:

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez Chancellor, City University of New York (CUNY)

José Luis Cruz Former Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost of CUNY

Robert Maruca Associate University Provost for Planning, CUNY

Karol Mason President, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Yi Li Provost, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Anthony Carpi

Associate Provost and Dean of Research, Professional Studies, and International Partnerships, John Jay College of Criminal Justice



Félix V. Matos Rodríguez CUNY Chancellor

"CUNY's mission is to provide high quality education to all New Yorkers, regardless of background or means, and to allow everyone to share in their piece of the American dream. The John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity's College Initiative program is an important extension of this mission to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to live a well-rounded, prosperous life. To truly reach all New Yorkers and to ensure the most vulnerable among us aren't left behind, it is imperative that we actively engage those who have been impacted by the legal system, which, as we know, disproportionately effects communities of color. Higher education is more than a vehicle for upward social mobility; it is also the best way we have to undo the harm caused by decades of misguided policies and practices that have resulted in our current state of mass incarceration."



"One our most overlooked populations is those students who have been incarcerated. It is no secret that the United States' criminal legal system is rife with prejudice, and those who have been at the mercy of this inequitable system find walls erected before them as they pursue an education in an effort to better themselves and contribute to their community. In my view, it is nothing less than the duty of higher education to tear down those walls and offer a second chance to anyone who seeks it."

José Luis Cruz Former CUNY Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost



Karol V. Mason John Jay College President

"I am proud that the John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity has operated the College Initiative since 2015 to support individuals with legal system involvement enrolling and succeeding in college. And the Institute is spearheading work across the CUNY network to make all CUNY schools more accessible and equitable for system-impacted students."

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BUILDING PATHWAYS FROM CORRECTIONS TO CUNY

The Institute provides a continuum of services within correctional facilities and in the community that engages with system-impacted people wherever they are in their academic journey, connecting them to programs at CUNY and services within New York City.

Outreach in Correctional Facilities

We communicate with incarcerated individuals interested in pursuing higher education through written correspondence, in-person outreach at facilities, and upon referral from other organizations. Some are seeking to return to college after some time and others are contemplating enrollment for the first time. In the wake of COVID-19, we paused in-person outreach and relied on referrals from partner organizations and correspondence to connect with individuals interested in utilizing our services.

In fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21, the Institute corresponded with approximately 300 incarcerated individuals.

Prison-to-College Pipeline

Founded in 2011, the Prison-to-College Pipeline (P2CP) is CUNY's college-in-prison program at Otisville Correctional Facility in Orange County, NY, which is about 90 minutes away from John Jay's Manhattan campus. P2CP enrolls roughly 55 students a semester in accredited liberal arts courses designed to fulfill CUNY's general education requirements and prepares students to continue their degrees in the community. 213 students have enrolled in P2CP at Otisville since 2011.

College Readiness at Rikers Island

Realizing the opportunity for people to jumpstart their college careers while serving their sentence at Rikers, the Institute started offering college preparation classes there in 2017. In 2019, we partnered with CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College to teach two credit-bearing classes in the jail—Critical Thinking 100 and Critical Thinking 120. The third semester of class was interrupted by the outbreak of COVID-19 and was completed remotely. A total of **35 students** completed credit-bearing courses at Rikers Island before we were forced to suspend classes due to COVID-19.

Although currently suspended due to COVID-19, the Learning Exchange brings students from John Jay's Manhattan campus to the prison for monthly seminars with Otisville students on a range of topics taught by faculty across CUNY. Over 100 students from John Jay's Manhattan campus have participated in the Learning Exchange since 2011.

Among alumni who have been released, 14 are now enrolled in college in the community, and 8 have already earned degrees while in the community. Many of these graduates are now working on their second and third academic degrees.



Professor Jessica Gordon-Nembhard teaching Africana Studies 121 at Otisville Correctional Facility. (Photo credit: Amber Gray.)

Prison-to-College Pipeline: Adapting for the Present and Future

Building a Computer Lab

One of the biggest challenges to providing college-inprison is the lack of access to technology and research resources for incarcerated students. Unlike traditional college students, incarcerated students cannot access the internet or have ready access to computers. In 2020 we installed a larger and substantially updated computer lab with updated computers with skill-building software and library resources.

In a typical semester, the P2CP course offerings include:

Course #	Course Title	Frequency
ENG 101	Composition I	Two sections
SOC 101	Introduction to Sociology	Two sections
SOC 104	Tabloid Justice	One section
LIT 327	Crime, Punishment, and Justice in World Literatures	One section
LIT 106	Introduction to Film	One section
DRA 213	Acting I	One section
URG 280	Learning Exchange	Monthly, year long

Equipping Classrooms with Videoconferencing Equipment

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we immediately shifted to a distance education model, as we worked with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to temporarily re-purpose videoconferencing equipment at Otisville for academic purposes. We then obtained private funding to purchase and install additional videoconferencing equipment at Otisville to connect with students and facilitate classes remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The equipment has enabled us to increase contact between professors and students, offer "office hours," provide academic counseling, conduct reentry planning, and facilitate other components of a traditional college-in-prison program remotely. Looking forward, this equipment will enable us to host guest lecturers from around the world, provide additional small group and one-on-one support, and generally bridge the distance between our staff and students.

> From an initial class of 14 students in 2011, by the 2019-2020 academic year, P2CP had grown to 55 students per semester with an average GPA of 3.6.

College Initiative

Our largest program, College Initiative (CI), assists students who have been involved in the criminal legal system in applying to, enrolling in, and succeeding in colleges across CUNY, within SUNY, as well as at several private schools in the metropolitan area. Our model includes academic counseling, peer mentoring, community engagement, and wraparound support services. CI is a community of enrolled students, aspiring students, and alumni, who support and encourage each other through peer mentoring and alumni activities.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, CI staff increased supports to students struggling with the transition to online learning—including personally delivering tablets to students, offering additional tutoring and technical assistance, and helping students apply for financial assistance in the wake of the pandemic. We were fortunate to receive emergency assistance grants from foundations and individuals which enabled us to provide direct financial assistance as well.

- SUPPORTIVE SERVICES: The Institute's Intake and Supportive Services unit makes initial contact with all new CI participants to conduct an assessment and addresses their non-academic needs. In fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21, the Supportive Services Unit worked closely with 200 CI participants on non-academic needs, such as housing, employment, benefits, and health.
- PEER MENTORING AND ALUMNI NETWORK: Cl students encounter unique obstacles that most traditional college students do not—such as juggling classes with probation or parole requirements. Cl's mentoring program stipends more experienced students to serve as mentors for first-year students. Mentors offer new students guidance on everyday issues, like connecting with tutoring services on campus, as well as more complex ones, like choosing whether or not to disclose their past legal system involvement in class. Research shows that peer mentoring increases retention and persistence through college and that completion of the first year of college leads to much higher graduation rates.

In the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years, we trained 56 experienced CI students to serve as mentors. These mentors provided guidance and support to 118 new CI students (as mentors can have more than one mentee).

The Institute provides civil legal services to students through a partnership with the Community Service Society of New York (CSS). A CSS attorney is on-site at the Institute three days a week, working closely with Institute staff to ensure that students know their rights, especially as it relates to access to housing, employment, and education. She also helps students correct damaging errors on their criminal histories (RAP sheet), apply for clemency, certificates of relief and of disability.

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LEGAL SUPPOR

In fiscal years 2020 and 2021, the CSS attorney provided over 700 legal services (such as support correcting errors on RAP sheets or applying for Certificates of Relief from Disabilities or Certificates of Good Conduct) to Institute participants



Carlos Quintana, former Director of College Access, hosting the 2020 College Initiative virtual graduation ceremony on Zoom.

Every spring, the College Initiative community comes together to celebrate its members who have earned a degree. In June 2020 and 2021, we celebrated our graduates via Zoom due to COVID-19. Between the two virtual events, we recognized 43 members of the Cl community who completed post-secondary degrees at 22 different CUNY, SUNY, and private institutions. In the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years, Cl students earned:

18 associate degrees **17** bachelor's degrees

9 master's degrees Since CI became part of the Institute's continuum of services in 2015, CI students have earned a total of 488 degrees from 20 different CUNY colleges, as detailed below:

14	Baruch College
42	Borough of Manhattan Community College
34	Bronx Community College
6	Brooklyn College
17	City College of New York
3	College of Staten Island
20	CUNY Graduate Center
1	CUNY School of Law
4	CUNY School of Professional Studies
40	Hostos Community College
43	Hunter College
32	John Jay College
26	Kingsborough Community College
52	LaGuardia Community College
52 67	LaGuardia Community College Lehman College
67	Lehman College
67 24	Lehman College Medgar Evers College
67 24 24	Lehman College Medgar Evers College New York City College of Technology

Our Students, By the Numbers

CI Students Enrolled in the Fall 2020 Semester:

84%	transfer students
61 %	previously incarcerated for over a year
9.5 years	average length of incarceration
45 %	on probation or parole
82 %	identify as Black or Latinx
68 %	identify as men
61 %	reported being unemployed at intake
93%	reported receiving some form of public assistance
42	average age

HSE Connect

We launched HSE Connect in 2020 to fill the gap in available programs for adults who are interested in college but still need their high school equivalency (HSE). Most HSE programming is designed for youth, so we partnered with the Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center to create an educational pathway for adults over the age of 25. Students who complete HSE Connect will be assisted in enrolling in college by College Initiative.

Although HSE Connect launched after the outbreak of COVID-19 and has operated remotely since then, 60 people have completed the Institute's intake process and 42 have enrolled in classes with MEOC.

EQUIPPING PRACTITIONERS TO EXCEL IN HUMAN SERVICES, COMMUNITY JUSTICE, AND POLICY ADVOCACY CAREERS

Our Career Pathways programs offer a range of educational and training opportunities to support the professional development of both students and more seasoned employees who seek employment and advancement in the fields of youth justice, human services, community justice, policy advocacy, and philanthropy. Our fellowships and certificate programs combine academic study with service learning and skills development.

Fellowships

Three major foundations fund the Institute to offer robust fellowship initiatives that combine long-term internship placements at non-profit organizations with academic study and professional enrichment to train the next generation of leaders in youth justice, policy advocacy, and philanthropy. Fellowships provide students with financial assistance in the form of tuition remission or generous stipends, a transportation allowance, and an opportunity grant for books, computers, or other personal expenses. Internship host sites also receive access to training and support from the Institute.

In response to COVID-19, the Institute's Fellowship staff reconceived and launched an entirely webbased cohort—operating the orientation, class, host site placements, and other professional development opportunities virtually. This year, our Fellows met the increased need of our host sites—many of whom experience budget cuts—by taking on additional responsibility and making invaluable contributions to their host agencies.

The Pinkerton Fellowship Initiative

Undergraduate students selected to be Pinkerton Fellows are placed for 12-15 months at local nonprofit organizations that serve system-involved youth. In their various roles, fellows expand operational capacity and bring new ideas, perspectives, and enthusiasm to their host organizations.

In the 2019-20 Pinkerton Fellowship cohort, nineteen Pinkerton Fellows contributed **nearly 20,000 hours of work** to their host sites.

Host Site Feedback:

At BronxConnect we have seen Yasmeen adapt to a complex work environment with many moving parts. The organization has benefited from Pinkerton Fellows by having well vetted interns that have a great support system. Yasmeen has been instrumental at serving as an assistant to a case manager. In the process, she is able to learn all aspect of case management. In addition, because Pinkerton has such an impressive process of selecting qualified interns like Yasmeen, we are able to place them in substantive roles.

> Jose Marte Program Manager BronxConnect

The Tow Policy Advocacy Fellowship

Graduate student Tow Fellows gain intensive onthe-ground experience in policy advocacy, while supporting the work of host sites to make systemic change in the world. Tow Fellows conduct research, track legislation, and organize constituents in order to support their host sites' advocacy agenda while gaining the experience and skills needed to become effective policy advocates themselves.

- In a typical academic year, Tow Fellows contribute over 3,000 hours to their host sites' advocacy agendas—by conducting research, tracking legislation, organizing constituents, and so forth.
- Over the course of the 2020-21 academic year, Abigail Ramos contributed to the Osborne Association's advocacy efforts to advance
 A.4250-A/S.2841-A, a bill to protect in-person visitations at correctional facilities. The State Senate passed the bill in May 2021, and as of this publication, the Osborne Association is working toward getting the bill passed in the Assembly and signed into law.

The David Rockefeller Fund (DRF) Fellowship

Designed specifically to bring people with 'lived experience in the criminal legal system' into philanthropy, the DRF Fellowship immerses two fellows a year in the worlds of philanthropy and legal system reform. At DRF, Fellows assist with grants administration and daily operations. They bring their unique perspectives to the causes the DRF works to address, while also gaining hands-on experience and building the skills and knowledge needed to work in the field of philanthropy. DRF Fellows complete additional professional development activities to complement their on-the-ground learning and to solidify their post-Fellowship plans. Fellows also participate in DRF board meetings and typically make a presentation on what they have learned and accomplished to the foundation and the Institute at the culmination of their fellowship.

To date, nine individuals have participated in the DRF Fellowship. Three Fellows helped launch the Canary Fund—an independent grantmaking body—which received \$200,000 from the DRF Board to distribute.

Host Site Feedback:

Maya has contributed so much! Her court observation work has been fantastic. She's also a really valuable member of the team, especially because she's so grounded and insightful. She provided substantive feedback on our policy brief on emerging adults that made it better. And she is helping our Community Advocate plan a session on policy reform for our Youth Speakers Institute.

Kate Rubin Director of Policy & Strategic Initiatives Youth Represent

Professional Studies Certificate Programs

Bridging the worlds of workforce development, higher education, and criminal legal reform, our certificate programs prepare people for successful careers in human services and community justice. In consultation with employers, peers, and directly impacted individuals, we designed three programs to increase pathways for people with lived experience in the criminal legal system to obtain and advance employment in the human services field: the Navigator Certificate in Human Services and Community Justice, Collective Leadership Supervisor Training, and Tech 101. Across these programs, the Institute's Career Pathways unit trains 150 people a year. Our Career Pathways division utilizes the principles of adult learning and evidence-based strategies to build individual and organizational capacity to better serve people with criminal legal system involvement. To boost workplace success, participants develop crucial employability skills identified by nonprofit and government employers.

Navigator Certificate in Human Services and Community Justice

A one-semester program offered in partnership with John Jay College's Professional Studies, the Navigator Certificate prepares people with lived experience in the justice system to gain employment or earn promotions in the human services field. Graduates of the program who enroll at John Jay earn six credits toward a degree.

- The Institute launched its third cohort of the Navigator Certificate in early 2020. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, Institute staff initially developed a series of non-credit-bearing workshops for Navigator students to maintain some sense of community and to begin honing the tech skills needed to participate in a virtual class-particularly as Navigator students are older than traditional college students and less comfortable with technology due to prior periods of incarceration.
- The Institute launched its first fully web-based Navigator Certificate cohort in the Fall of 2020replicating some elements on the in-person class remotely, while also introducing new supports, such as optional Saturday morning study sessions, to help students adapt to the virtual format.
- In the first four cohorts, 66 students completed the Navigator Certification course. After completing college-level course work for the Navigator Certificate, 22 students also connected with College Initiative for assistance continuing their educations. We are currently building a robust alumni group engaged through surveys, focus groups, and email blasts to provide job leads, training opportunities, and other assistance.

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STUDENT PROFILE

Frank* served nearly 20 years in prison and was released in 2017. He participated in the first Navigator Certificate cohort in 2019. At the time, he was working as a paralegal at a law firm, but he was interested in transitioning to a career that draws upon his lived experience and involves giving back to the community. After he completed the Navigator Certificate, Frank secured a job as a co-trainer with one of the Navigator Certificate instructors to provide sessions in the Social Resilience Model (SRM), a neuroscience-based approach to improving individual and group well-being and resilience. In 2020, Frank also launched a nonprofit organization that provides reentry and support services for formerly-incarcerated individuals, while continuing to work as an SRM trainer.

* Name changed to protect his privacy.

Collective Leadership Supervisor Training (CLST)

The landscape of criminal legal services in New York City is being transformed as more people are hired who have life experience like the program participants they are serving—that is, they have been involved in the criminal legal system, substance use treatment and mental health systems. Targeted supervisory training builds a supportive organizational culture as agencies seek to hire and retain more employees in navigator, mentor, and other peer and credible messenger positions, and as they seek to promote supervisors and managers with lived experience.

In response to needs identified by employers and employees, the Institute launched the Collective Leadership Supervisor Training (CLST), a 21-hour certificate course on supervisory practices that develop initiative and leadership in all staff. The training increases supervisors' capacity to convey workplace expectations and performance feedback, build their trauma-informed supervision practices, and develop a "collective leadership" approach that makes space for initiative and leadership by employees at all levels. Designed as a practicum, the training sessions are spread over two to three months, giving supervisors time to practice skills, report back to the class about their experiences, and receive additional coaching to deepen their skills.

The Institute has trained **164 supervisors in six cohorts over the last two years**, building supervisory capacity across the spectrum of human services from youth justice and reentry to behavioral health, housing, and employment programs. About one-third of participating supervisors report that they are directly impacted by the criminal legal system and another twenty-five percent report that they have immediate family members who are directly impacted. In post-training surveys, participants described the training as follows:

CLST FEEDBACK

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- "Life-changing and transformative... many of my reflex practices are now being revamped."
- "I now have the tools to actually cultivate the leadership skills of my supervisees rather than having them rely on me for direction...I'm much more conscious of how I can do better about creating leadership culture."
 - "I am committed to hiring individuals with lived experience and now feel better prepared to offer the support and structure to set any employee from any background up for success."

We also surveyed the managers of CLST attendees, who described their employees as follows:

- "More self-reflective"
- "More open to feedback"
- "Showing improved adaptability and agility to switch gears when needed"
- "Improved ability to communicate and engage with staff beyond direct reports"

Tech 101: Introduction to Technology for the Workplace

People who have lost years to incarceration are often at an extreme disadvantage getting and performing on jobs because of gaps in their technology skills. In response to employers and people seeking to enter the workforce, the Institute designed Tech 101, a certificate course in which participants learn technology fundamentals, including Microsoft Office and Google Suite, email basics, and online job searching. The 12-session course is free, and students are provided with notebook computers for use during class.

Approximately 80 students participated in Tech 101 before the program was suspended due to COVID-19 and the Institute shifted to providing individualized technology coaching for students.

CHANGING SYSTEMS AND CREATING ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

The Institute is changing laws, policies, and practices that marginalize and dehumanize people with criminal records. Our work increases their opportunities for upward social mobility by eliminating barriers and creating access to employment, housing, and higher education.

We work in partnership with colleague organizations and directly affected people to mitigate the collateral consequences of mass incarceration and legal system involvement primarily on Black and Brown communities in New York. Our strategies include policy research, advocacy, training and education, and technical assistance.

Eliminating Barriers and Expanding Access to Housing

Fair Chance for Housing

The Institute leads a coalition of over 80 organizations in a multi-year campaign to eliminate background checks in housing. We hit several milestones in 2020. On August 28, City Council Member Stephen Levin introduced The Fair Chance for Housing Act, Intro-2047, a bill we crafted with the assistance and direction of directly-impacted people and the advocacy community. To build support for this bill, we held in-person and virtual rallies, participated in City Council testimonies, and convened monthly meetings of our members and supporters in the Fair Chance for Housing Campaign.

The campaign also focuses on increasing access to the largest source of affordable housing in the City—**the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)**—for people with convictions. In 2020, we focused on changing admissions criteria that ban people from NYCHA for years after their conviction and on NYCHA's practice of seeking exclusions of residents who are arrested. After years of ongoing advocacy, NYCHA announced some policy changes in September that would increase access and reduce the length exclusions. We organized campaign members to testify at a City Council hearing to push NYCHA to go further and will continue to oversee implementation of these policy changes.



Fair Chance for Housing rally at the Bellevue Men's Shelter in Midtown Manhattan, August 2020 with New York City Council Members Stephen Levin, Keith Powers, and Carlina Rivera; Deputy Public Advocate Delsenia Glover; and Reverend Winnie Varghese of Trinity Church Wall Street.

AIRBNB:

In 2018, we learned that Airbnb was banning people from their services based on record checks. We subsequently started working with the American Civil Liberties Union, Legal Action Center, Community Service Society of New York, Bronx Defenders, and Precedential Group to demand that Airbnb change its discriminatory policy of using arrest and conviction records to ban users. In 2020 we continued building a coalition of supporters and sent Airbnb a demand letter, calling on the company to stop using arrest and conviction records to justify banning people from its platform.

Eliminating Barriers and Expanding Access to Education and Employment

The Institute provides training and resources to higher education, workforce development, corrections and social services providers to equip them to work more effectively with people who have been involved in the criminal legal system.



GETTING TO WORK WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD: NEW YORK STATE LICENSE GUIDES (2020 EXPANDED EDITION), is

a series explaining the process for people with conviction records to obtain licenses in 25, high-demand occupations and professions. This resource dispels myths and misinformation that often discourage people with convictions from pursuing employment and career paths that are actually available to them.



GETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: A GUIDE TO NAVIGATING

BACKGROUND CHECKS, is designed to help people with conviction records navigate the individual, institutional, and systemic barriers erected by background checks. It is common for people to feel nervous or stigmatized when going through a background check. Preparing in advance can help the experience become less intimidating. This guide helps readers understand what appears on a conviction record, prepare for a background check, and be ready to respond to questions.



The Institute, in partnership with the CUNY Provost, conducted research and released **MAPPING THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK: THE UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENT TO STUDENTS IMPACTED BY THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM**, which details the scope of CUNY's policies and programs for students impacted by the criminal legal system. The report is based on interviews with over 85 people across CUNY and identifies opportunities for CUNY to better support and welcome those students.



A virtual convening of CUNY Justice Learning Collaborative members.

CUNY Justice Learning Collaborative

In September 2020, the Institute launched the CUNY Justice Learning Collaborative to bring together partners from across the 25-campus University system who share a common purpose: to create a more equitable and accessible CUNY for students who have been impacted by the criminal legal system. The CUNY Justice Learning Collaborative convenes bi-monthly to:



Share experience and expertise in supporting systemimpacted CUNY students, and foster peer-to-peer learning and information sharing among colleagues

Surface opportunities for CUNY to do more in practice and policy to create access to opportunities for system-impacted people through higher education



Create a space for directly-impacted students to share their experiences at CUNY and inform decisionmaking related to improving policy and practice



Foster partnerships across campuses so that our efforts complement, rather than compete with, one another



Raise consciousness that higher education access for people impacted by the criminal legal system is a key part of redressing the racially disproportionate harms of over-policing and mass incarceration.

Creating More Comprehensive and Integrated Systems of College in and After Prison

Mapping the Landscape of Higher Education in New York State Prisons

Published in 2019, this report was the first comprehensive study describing the more than 15 colleges providing for-credit academic programs in 30 New York state prisons. Based on interviews with college administrators and corrections officials, and surveys of students, the report recognizes both the diversity of programs and identifies four systemic issues that must be addressed to create a more comprehensive, integrated and sustainable system of college in prison: equity of access, quality standards, reentry services, and funding. These issues inform the Institute's ongoing policy advocacy with state officials.

Technical Assistance on Reentry Planning for College-in-Prison Programs

As part of its investment in expanding college-in-prison across the state, the District Attorney of New York's (DANY) Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (CJII) funds the Institute and the State University of New York (SUNY) to provide technical assistance to seven colleges providing college programs in 17 different correctional facilities. The Institute focuses on aiding the colleges in the development of their reentry planning protocols and their working relationships with the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS). When in-person instruction was interrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions, we shared our experience shifting to snail mail and videoconferencing to continue educational services.

Creating a Robust Community of College-in-Prison Providers

The Institute actively participates in the **New York Consortium on Higher Education in Prisons (NYCHEP)**, a statewide consortium of college-in-prison providers that meets regularly to support incarcerated and formerly-incarcerated students. In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Institute joined with colleagues in NYCHEP to make a substantial investment to ensure that all people incarcerated in New York State facilities had protective masks. NYCHEP also serves as another venue to share information, resources, and best practices among college-in-prison providers.

Developing Resources and Toolkits

The Institute has developed and widely distributed a series of publication that assemble information and experience into user-friendly tools designed to aid providers and directly affected people themselves.



THE STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FUND

The **Student Financial Assistance Fund** provides critically-important financial support to students facing non-academic obstacles that could derail their academic success and degree attainment. In the past two fiscal years, we have been able to distribute a total of \$63,548 to 122 Institute participants to aid them in paying off old loans that kept them from registering, buying books or a laptop to enable them to participate in class, and sometimes even paying rent and utility bills that could result in homelessness. This assistance is possible through the generous contributions of individuals and corporations, and has been invaluable in making it possible for our students to stay in school and graduate.



"Prisons Divide" by Carol Shapiro, part of her series on making our carceral system more visible.

Artist and activist **Carol Shapiro**, the keynote speaker at our first virtual gala.

Arts and (In)Justice: An Evening with Artist and Activist Carol Shapiro

On December 1st, 2020, the Institute held its first ever virtual fundraiser, which examined mass incarceration through the visual and performing arts.

Arts and (In)Justice featured the work of Carol Shapiro, a long-time legal system reform advocate whose artworks critique the U.S. punishment system. Carol was joined by Bruce Cohan, a Project Director for JRM Construction and long-time supporter of justice-focused philanthropic causes. Richard Hoehler, a drama teacher in the Institute's Prisonto-College Pipeline program at Otisville Correctional Facility and the founder of the Acting Out theater company, coordinated performances by four formerlyincarcerated students — Christopher Lee, Gilfredo Valentin, Labre Fulcher, and Damien Walker.



Thank you to everyone who supports and sustains our work.

Funders

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Thank you also to everyone who attended our virtual gala and donated to support our students, including these corporate sponsors:

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Out of respect for their privacy, we are not listing the names of our individual donors, but we appreciate their generosity.

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Finally, thank you to **Katie Beiter** and **Matt Bond** for developing this report and to **Nicole Alexander** for designing it.

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FINANCE STATEMENTS



Revenue FY21 \$5,729,148

- 64% Government Grants & Contracts \$3,690,571
- **35%** Foundation Grants & Contracts \$2,019,268
 - 1% Individual & Corporation Donations \$51,439



Expenses FY21 \$5,612,779

- 66% Personnel \$3,674,550
- 22% OTPS \$1,253,349
- **12%**Facilities & Administrative Costs\$684,880



Revenue FY20 \$5,160,136

- 69% Government Grants & Contracts \$3,557,307
- **31%** Foundation Grants & Contracts \$1,600,019
- 0.5% Individual & Corporation Donations \$25,482



Expenses FY20 \$4,960,450 63% Personnel \$3,106,485

- **25**% \$1,255,005
- **12%** Facilities & Administrative Costs \$598,960

JOHN JAY COLLEGE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY

