



MINNESOTA STATE
Board of Trustees

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

NAME: Academic and Student Affairs

DATE: June 20, 2023

TITLE: Prison Education Program

- Proposed New Policy or Amendment to Existing Policy Approvals Required by Policy Other Approvals
- Monitoring/Compliance Information

PRESENTERS

Satasha Green-Stephen, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
Jesse Mason, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Sharon Pierce, President, Minneapolis College
Ann Deiman-Thornton, Dean of the School of Education, Public and Human Service, Minneapolis College
Deidra Peaslee, President, Saint Paul College

PURPOSE

This informational presentation will provide an overview and update on the engagement of the colleges and universities of Minnesota State in providing educational opportunities to incarcerated individuals.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nearly thirty years ago, the 1994 Crime Bill banned individuals in prison from accessing federal financial aid for postsecondary education, including Pell grants. According to the Vera Institute, estimates suggest there were 772 schools offering college programs to people in prison prior to the legislation. Three years later, only eight remained.

While individual colleges and universities worked to identify and offer courses in correctional facilities following the 1994 Crime Bill, significant federal policy changes did not materialize until 2015, when U.S. Department of Education launched the Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites initiative (Second Chance Pell). Nine Minnesota State institutions have served as experimental sites for state and/or federal correctional facilities: Dakota County Technical College, Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College, Inver Hills Community College, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis College, Minnesota State University, Mankato, and North Hennepin Community College, Pine Technical & Community College, and South Central College.

In December 2020, Congress passed the FAFSA Simplification Act which, among other changes, restored Pell eligibility for incarcerated students beginning July 1, 2023. In the past year,

Minnesota State has continued its engagement with the Minnesota Department of Corrections to prepare for this expansion of eligibility.

Supporting higher education opportunities for incarcerated individuals aligns with Equity 2030, supports Minnesota's postsecondary attainment goal, and creates employment opportunities and helps meet the demand for educated employees in high-demand fields. For example, the included report *How Corrections Departments are Preparing People for In-Demand Careers that Support America's Infrastructure*, describes the importance of prison education programs in meeting the demand for skilled employees who will be needed to achieve the goals of the recent federal infrastructure bill.