

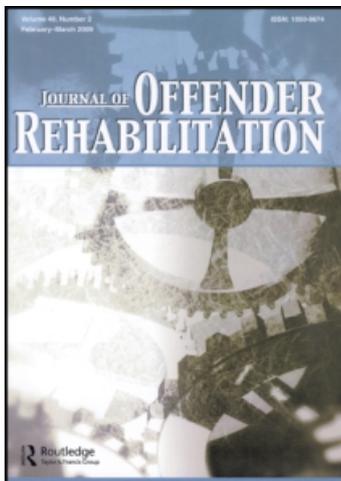
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### The Inviting Convicts to College Program

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# The Inviting Convicts to College Program

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*While we know formal education is an important variable for reducing recidivism, there are few prison systems still offering college courses. We introduce the Inviting Convicts to College Program that deploys undergraduate student-teachers as instructors of college level courses inside prisons. The student-teachers are supervised by professors. The course taught is Convict Criminology. This article describes the program, and uses quantitative and qualitative methods to assess four semesters taught at a medium-security state prison. The methodology uses both a survey and focused interviews of prisoners and student teachers. Findings indicate the program goals were met, and the courses taught served as valuable educational experiences for convicts and student-teachers.*

*KEYWORDS* college prison programs, convict criminology, recidivism

## INTRODUCTION

In this article, we describe and assess a new prisoner college preparatory program developed through a partnership with a medium-security state prison and the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. The Inviting Convicts to College Program (ICCP) has been designed to be a relatively inexpensive way to help address the lack of college programs available in prison.

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Through their involvement with the ICCP, prisoners learn about college enrollment and traditional college expectations. At the same time, the ICCP program has been designed to provide educational opportunities for the more “traditional” undergraduate college students by including their involvement as an active and vital part of the program. Under the direction of the coordinating professors, these students enroll as teaching interns and become directly responsible for course delivery.

## PRISON EDUCATION AND CORRECTIONAL PHILOSOPHIES

The main goal of prison education programs is to increase the educational level of prisoners and improve their chances of success upon release. As correctional populations continue to increase (Austin, Bruce, Carroll, McCall, & Richards 2001), providing postsecondary education programs become even more important, because the vast majority of convicts will someday exit prison and return to our local communities. College education programs, in particular, represent one important way in which prisoners can become better equipped for the challenges that they will face when they return to society (Ross & Richards, 2009). Research prior to and during the 1990s confirms this suggestion by showing a reduced likelihood of recidivism among those convicts who completed college education programs during incarceration (Blackburn, 1979; Bala, Thorpe, & MacDonald, 1984; O’Neil, 1990; Wreford, 1990).

Despite these findings, when public outrage about criminals getting a “free ride” while law abiding students pay for their education<sup>1</sup> combined with the political rhetoric associated with getting tough on crime, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that eliminated Pell Grant eligibility for prisoners (Rose, 2004). As part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1993 and the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1994, inmates are legally ineligible for federal student grants and loans. With the passage of these two acts, college education programs began to disappear from the offerings in prison education departments, and by the end of the 1990s most states were reporting that the elimination of Pell Grant funding resulted in the drastic reduction or elimination of the college programs in their prisons (Parenti, 1999; Pollock, 2004; Tewksbury, Erickson, & Taylor, 2000; Tregoe, 2003; Welsh, 2002).

This negative view of education in prison has not always been held by the U.S. Congress, however. The role of education programs in prison has changed as public and political ideas about punishment have changed over the past few decades. In the 1970s, prison education departments focused not only on academic basics, such as reading and writing, but also on the social skills that are essential to succeeding outside of prison (Hobler, 1999; Ryan, 1995). A full range of adult basic education (ABE), secondary,

postsecondary, vocational, and social programs were available to inmates. This was a period when the federal government recognized the importance of a “holistic” approach to rehabilitation and reintegration and, as such, some of these programs were backed by federal funds (Hobler, 1999).

In contrast, the 1980s were characterized by a much more punitive and retributive approach to corrections. Martinson’s (1974) claim that “nothing works” when it comes to rehabilitation helped fuel the desire for harsher punishments, even though he later clarified his stance to be that rehabilitation programs can work when they are done correctly (Martinson, 1979). The loss of federal funding for prison education programs contributed to the functional illiteracy of a large number of prisoners (Hobler, 1999). Today, over half of all convicts are functionally illiterate, meaning that their reading skills are at or below the fifth-grade level (Kerle, 2004).

The 1990s continued massive increases in the prison population, further complicating matters for prison education departments. Overcrowding led to education classes filling up quickly, but budget constraints did not allow for the expansion of the programs (Hobler, 1999). Essentially, there was a greater demand to participate in the programs than spaces available. The result was long waiting lists for enrollment in the most basic of educational programs.

Currently, every federal prison and most state facilities have education programs in some form. Adult basic education and secondary education are the most commonly found types of courses due to the large number of prisoners that lack basic academic skills as well as a high school education. College programs, however, are rare (Lahm, 2000; Stephan, 2008). While some prisons have received funding to offer a few college level courses, the money usually runs out in short order. There appears to be very few prison systems able to sustain college prison programs over time, as most prisoners lack the financial resources to pay tuition. The fundamental goal of the ICCP is to help address this problem by bringing college curriculum back to prisons through inexpensive and collaborative partnerships between prisons and universities. As we will show, the ICCP offers one inexpensive method to help address these limitations.

## The Effectiveness of Education Programs in a Prison Setting

Whereas research on the effectiveness of prison education programs tends to show that such programs can be effective, they leave many important issues and questions unanswered. While many of these studies use recidivism to determine whether or not an education program was successful (e.g., Fabelo, 2002; Duguid, 1997; Duguid & Pawson, 1998; Wilson, 1994), they disagree on how best to measure recidivism. Fabelo (2002), for instance, choose to include parole violations in his operationalization of recidivism, but this is

by no means a universally agreed upon definition. In fact, some studies that use the likelihood of recidivism to measure success do not specify a definition for recidivism. Instead, they simply use reincarceration as a marker (Duguid, 1997; Duguid & Pawson, 1998; Wilson, 1994).

Another question that arises in regard to recidivism is how long should a person be crime-free in order to be considered a success? Fabelo (2002) suggests that a time frame of two years is sufficient to determine success, while Wilson (1994) argues that five years may be a more appropriate time frame. Others have argued that recidivism is an indirect measure of success and more of a measure of police activity (Vacca, 2004), implying that an alternative measure of success should be employed.

One such possibility could be the use of employability after release (Jenkins, Steurer, & Pendry, 1995). Being able to obtain a job after release is crucial to an offender "making it" on the outside. If an exconvict can't earn a living legitimately, they may return to illegal work. Since the ultimate goal of these programs is to keep parolees from returning to prison, the recidivism measure should not necessarily be eliminated completely, but instead enhanced. Fabelo's (2002) study represents a good example of this method of enhanced measurement since he does consider both employment and recidivism. Jenkins et al. (1995) measured success after release by determining the ability of an exconvict to obtain employment after prison release. They found that the higher the level of education completed during incarceration, the more likely they were to find employment. The small number of offenders in the study that completed a college education had a 100% success rate in finding employment. However, these researchers did not look at whether the released prisoners were underemployed for their level of education, which can be a problem for someone on the job market with a criminal record.

A methodological issue that consistently arises in most studies of prison education programs is a self-selection bias. Since the participants of the programs have chosen to participate rather than having been randomly selected, they may be inherently different from those that chose not to participate. The inmates that participate in education programs are more motivated to succeed than those that do not and this may make them less inclined to recidivate (Rose, 2004). To help control for this self-selection bias, some efforts have been made to make the sample at least demographically similar to the rest of the prison population (Wilson, 1994), but simply matching participants with demographically similar non-participants is not likely to be sufficient solution to this problem. Duiguid (1997) and Duiguid and Pawson's (1998) method of using the Canadian Statistical Information on Recidivism Scale (SIR)<sup>2</sup> represents an innovative way of alleviating some of the self-selection problem, because the offenders are not compared to those that did not participate. Instead, they are only compared to the SIR predication of how well they would do after

release. Yet, this method has an inherent limitation since it relies heavily on the accuracy of the SIR prediction tool to determine the success of the education programs.

In order to truly assess the effectiveness of any prison education program, one must also look at the quality of the program being taught. Programs are greatly affected by inadequate funding and lack of supplies, attitudes of the correctional officers, teachers, and prisoners regarding education and rehabilitation (Vacca, 2004; Lin, 2000). If the setting is not accommodating to education, learning may not actually take place, which makes evaluation of the program difficult and even misleading (Pollock, 2004). As such, in our assessment of the ICCP we focused on two underlying assessment factors: program quality and its ability to enroll exconvicts into university and/or technical colleges. We first provide a detailed description of the program, before turning to the assessment and the implications of the results.

## THE ICCP

The ICCP is designed to be a low cost college preparatory program conducted on site at a local area prison where eligible inmates enroll in a noncredit college course. The course is taught by senior undergraduate students who are closely advised by faculty. These student interns teach the two-hour classes for 14 consecutive weeks. The pilot program began in 2003. Over the past six years the ICCP has grown and evolved. The program is now offered at two prisons during the Fall and Spring semesters. Two student instructors per course now co-teach the classes at each prison. The program has received positive reviews in newspaper stories, from correctional administrators, and has been featured on public radio and television.

### Curriculum and Student Expectations: Prisoners and Undergraduates

The primary mission of the ICCP is to enable prisoners to make an informed decision about enrolling in a university, community, or technical college upon their release. Is it possible and feasible for them to go to college? Do they feel that they could successfully complete and earn an accredited degree? For those who believe they can, the ultimate goal of the ICCP is for prisoners to attend college or university upon release from prison. As such, prisoner-students work with their student-teachers to complete the admissions financial aid applications and mail the forms to colleges and universities.

Undergraduate student-teachers design and deliver course curriculum to their prisoner-students. They are advised on a weekly basis by the

professors responsible for coordinating the ICCP. During these meetings, they receive instruction on lecture presentation and organization, course development, and baccalaureate degree requirements. Essentially, these undergraduate instructors learn how to put together course materials to teach a college-level course, which may help prepare them for future appointments as a graduate teaching assistant. For instance, they develop a teaching portfolio containing syllabi, written lectures, exams and/or quizzes, in-class assignments, and homework assignments. After teaching the course at the prison, they might also write research papers pertaining to their experiences with the ICCP, which are presented at conferences and/or submitted for publication (i.e., Richards, Faggiani, Roffers, Hendricksen, & Kruger, 2008a, 2008b).

Like all traditional university courses, successful progress through the course depends upon successful completion of all objectives and requirements illustrated on the course syllabus (i.e., class participation, course assignments, exams, satisfactory research papers, and so on). The ICCP course content that we describe and assess centered on *convict criminology*, a developing field in critical criminology that:

...consists primarily of essays and empirical research conducted and written by convicts or ex-convicts, on their way to completing or already in possession of a Ph.D., or by enlightened academics who critique existing literature, policies, and practices, thus contributing to a new perspective on criminology, criminal justice, corrections, and community corrections. (Ross & Richards, 2003, p. 6)

Finally, student-teachers must also meet with the prison education director on-site at the prison for orientation prior to their first class meeting. Here, they are introduced to the security protocols of the prison that they will need to adhere to, as well as, measures that can be taken to help ensure their safety in the event of an emergency.

### Requirements and Procedures for Enrollment in the ICCP

The prison education directors that we have worked with to coordinate the ICCP have been primarily responsible for recruiting and enrolling prisoner-students. Based upon our suggestions, these directors have sought to recruit prisoners according to a number of relevant conditions. First, prisoners that have not previously earned a high school diploma, GED, or HSED cannot be accommodated. Second, based upon the educational director's discretion, convicts that have a history of conduct reports for major prison rule infractions during their current incarceration have, typically, been disqualified from enrollment. Third, they have given preference to those prisoners approaching their parole or mandatory release date.

## METHODS: ASSESSING THE ICCP

The evaluation presented here represents an assessment of four separate ICCP courses that followed the previously described curriculum for both prisoners and students. Each of these programs were offered consecutively from the Fall semester of 2006 to the Spring semester of 2008, and offered at the same Midwestern medium-security male prison. Our assessment focused on determining whether or not the underlying goals of the ICCP were accomplished. Was the ICCP: (a) successful at enrolling prisoner-students in an accredited university and/or technical colleges upon their release; (b) a rigorous educational program that helped prisoner-students become familiar with the expectations of college coursework, and enrollment and financial aid processing; and (c) an applicable, as well as, rigorous educational experience for the teaching interns.

### Data Collection

Prisoner assessments of the ICCP were established via prisoner opinion surveys consisting of questions using a 5-point Likert scale, and focus group discussions with enrolled prisoners. The survey included questions that allowed prisoner-students to express their opinions and assessments of the instructors, and the usefulness, difficulty, and quality of the course content. The four focus groups held with the prisoner-students related to their experiences in the ICCP (one focus group for each of the four separate programs). On average, these focus groups lasted about 60 minutes; course instructors were not present at these focus group sessions. Topics of discussion also included prisoner experiences and involvement in alternative prison education programs, their educational goals, their initial expectations of the ICCP, their opinions concerning the value and usefulness of the program, the degree of depth in the curriculum, and whether or not the program and the curriculum was challenging.

Also, separate interviews were conducted with the eight undergraduate student-teachers that taught the four courses at the prison. The interview format was the same for each student, and focused on such topics as their opinions about the educational benefits they may have received from teaching the courses.

## RESULTS

### Enrollment, Completion, and Success Figures: 2006–2008

The prisoner-students enrolled in the ICCP clearly understood the importance of a college education and, often, would explain that their involvement in crime resulted from their lack of education. This lack of experience with higher education led to a number of prisoner-students to be surprised by

**TABLE 1** ICCP Enrollment, Completion, and Success Figures: Prisoner-Students and Criminal Justice Students (Fall 2006 to Spring 2008)

	Fall 06	Spring 07	Fall 07	Spring 08	Totals
Prisoner-students enrolled	12	11	15	12	<i>N</i> = 50
Prisoner-students who successfully completed ICCP	7	5	7	3	<i>N</i> = 22
Prisoner-students admitted to a college by end of ICCP	1	1	0	1	<i>N</i> = 3
Criminal Justice students enrolled in ICCP	2	2	2	2	<i>N</i> = 8
Criminal Justice students who successfully completed ICCP	2	2	2	2	<i>N</i> = 8
Criminal Justice students presenting related paper at conference	1	1	0	2	<i>N</i> = 4

the level of difficulty and amount of academic work required in the course they took. Less than half of the inmates who enrolled in the ICCP successfully completed it (about 44%).

Although they came to class and participated in discussions, worked on the assigned readings, and attempted to complete the written assignments and exams, some did not have the language skills to effectively comprehend the reading, the study skills to successfully complete the exams, and the writing skills to produce a coherent paper. Simply put, the majority of the prisoner-students who enrolled in the ICCP were simply not ready for college.

While some prisoner-students were ill-prepared to comprehend the reading assignments and/or to complete college level homework assignments, exams, and papers, others clearly had the aptitudes to meet university expectations. Table 1 shows that about 14% of the prisoner-students who successfully completed the ICCP were enrolled in a university or technical college by the end of the program. It should be noted, however, that the ability of student-prisoners to successfully be admitted to a university or technical college was limited by their mandatory release dates. The majority of these inmates simply could not send off their application materials, because it would not be possible for them to attend during the following semester. The average length of time left to serve for those prisoners who successfully completed the ICCP was 5.8 years (with one prisoner having 21 years of time left to serve). As also shown in Table 1, all of the criminal justice students who were enrolled as teaching interns successfully completed the program, with half of those students presenting related papers at professional conferences.

### Prisoner-Student Assessments of the ICCP: Quantitative Results

Table 2 shows the averaged responses of the prisoner-students who met two conditions: (a) they successfully completed the ICCP between the Fall semester of 2006 and the Spring semester of 2008 (each received a university

**TABLE 2** Averaged Prisoner-Student Assessment Survey Responses: ICCP ( $N=19$ ); 5-Point Scale (Higher Values Represent More Positive/Supportive Responses)

Average response	
Instructor Evaluation:	
1. How would you rate the instructor's knowledge and command over the subject matter?	4.17
2. How well did the instructor explain the course content?	4.33
3. How well did the quiz and examination questions relate to the course content?	4.29
4. How well did the instructor stimulate your interest in learning the subject matter?	4.50
5. Would you recommend this instructor to fellow students?	4.72
Evaluation of Course Content:	
6. How would you rate the quality of the syllabus?	4.58
7. How would you rate the degree to which the syllabus was followed?	4.17
8. Do you feel that the substantive course content (i.e., convict criminology) is relevant to your future studies or career?	3.21
9. How well did the course book and supplementary reading materials serve as useful aids in understanding the course content?	4.63
10. Could this course benefit from more effective use of learning technology (computers, video, etc.)?	4.71
11. How would you rate the difficulty of subject matter as compared to other courses/programs you have taken in prison?	3.44

certificate in recognition of their accomplishment), and (b) they completed the prisoner-student assessment survey.

These data suggest that prisoner-students were satisfied with their learning experiences in the ICCP. The responses were consistently positive. They were confident in their teachers' command of the material. They indicated that they felt their teachers had the ability to explain and stimulate their interest in the course material (ranging from an average of 4.17 to 4.72). Prisoner-students also viewed the tests, syllabi, and organization of the course favorably (an average of 4.17 to 4.58), as well as, the course text (i.e., Ross & Richards' [2003] text *Convict Criminology*).

The lowest averaged response (3.21) related to the relevance of convict criminology to their future careers. The lower score suggests that while the convict criminology approach was intriguing to the prisoner-students, few prisoner-students felt that they would actually become convict criminologists, professors in a criminology department, or (due to their convict status) employed in the a criminal justice field. As such, this substantive material was not viewed as relevant to their preferred future careers.

While the average prisoner-student response to the question pertaining to the relative difficulty of the ICCP in comparison to other prison programs (3.44) seems low, one must be careful when interpreting this statistic. To explain, one could interpret this to mean that the ICCP may have been relatively easy for the prisoner-students to complete. However, such an interpretation ignores a number of known factors concerning prisoner-student enrollment and completion, which may explain the lower rating. For instance,

the prison education directors (who were primarily responsible for prisoner-student recruitment and enrollment) tended to enroll prisoners whom they often referred to as “the cream of the crop.” That is, they tended to enroll those students that may have had educational and intellectual advantages, which would help them to not only complete the typical prison education program, but the ICCP as well.

Clearly, the educational directors were not always accurate in their predictions. As Table 1 shows, 56% of the prisoner-students who enrolled in the ICCP failed to successfully complete it. These prisoners either failed a number of assignments and gave up, caught a trip to the detention cell block (the hole), received a reassignment in housing or work detail, or were transferred to another institution. As such, we should note that these students did not complete the prisoner-student assessment survey, which certainly had the potential to lower the average response to this question.

### Focus Groups with Prisoners

During our focus group discussion positive themes consistently emerged to further support the validity of the quantitative data. Our focus group data from all four discussions include multiple examples of prisoner-students emphasizing their satisfaction and support for the ICCP. The two comments below represent this theme:

The course has really opened my eyes to my full education potential, and what college education is really about. It is the best course in my eight years so far in prison. I think they should use this course in every prison and maybe other places where troubled kids and adults might be and don't know that this [college] might be possible for them.

Drugs, alcohol, depression, low self-esteem led me to give up on college. When I started taking this class I really didn't think it would change this. I was just doing it to occupy some time. But these two interns convinced me not to give up, and they've helped me get into [a local technical college]. I'll be there in Fall 2008.

For these prisoner-students, then, enrolling in the ICCP was fundamentally viewed as a positive experience that provided them with a possibility that, initially, they believed to be beyond their reach.

Two additional themes also consistently emerged in the prisoner-students' discussion: (a) the challenges that the course provided, and (b) the student-teachers performed admirably. On this first point, one prisoner who, by the time of the focus group discussion, had been accepted at a four-year regional state university commented:

I hope to see others benefit from the continuation of the course. The challenge was there, the content of the course was worthwhile, and it was all packaged in a great learning experience.

Following up on this comment, another prisoner-student emphasized the challenges in the ICCP in comparison to other programs that he had been involved in during his incarceration:

I didn't find the other programs I've done to be as challenging as this one [ICCP]. I found there to be only a few teachers [of other prison courses] who really cared about their students' education, and only a handful of students that cared about their education. It was as if they constructed the programs with the thought that inmates are lacking in intelligence.

Another prisoner-student, also addressing his classmates' comments on this subject, suggested that in comparison with the ICCP his experiences with other prison education programs were completely different:

In other programs I've taken there was no respect from teachers other than what was required by administration policies. And, if we showed up, we passed.

In this sampling of focus group transcripts, the prisoner-students' comments clearly suggest that ICCP was a challenging endeavor that provided a worthy and applicable educational experience.

Concerning the second theme relating to the student-teacher performance, one prisoner-student suggested that, over time, the student-teachers became more accustomed to the prison environment and that they grew into their roles as teachers:

Both instructors were very well prepared, professional, and related to the material and class well. But, I'm pretty sure this was their first prison experience. So early on I could see the tension in their faces. After a couple of classes though, they loosened up and were more self-confident and comfortable.

Throughout all of the focus group discussions, prisoner-students consistently provided supportive comments about the student-teachers. They were frequently described as: "respectful," "competent," "patient," "kind," and "concerned."

### Interviews with Undergraduate Student-Teachers

The qualitative data collected to assess student-teacher views and opinions concerning their involvement in the ICCP showed that student-teachers tended to stress a number of themes. Typically, they stressed that the experience was: rewarding, enlightening, and an applicable educational experience. On this first theme, one former student-teacher commented:

By the end of the semester, I felt valued and rewarded. I made a difference in those students' lives and they made a difference in my life as well.

Primarily, student-teachers stressed that these rewards came from the impact that they had when their students were successful at enrolling at a university by the end of the course.

Student-teachers also stressed how their prison teaching experiences cut through their preconceived notions of the male prison population, as well as, the public misconceptions of inmates and prisons. A former student-teacher who is now pursuing a law degree indicated how her experiences with the program “enlightened” her notion and conception of prisoners and prisons:

This class taught me not to judge others based on public perceptions. I was able to work with people that society deems unfit to live with and see them as people rather than just criminals. I know this will also benefit my legal career. This class is a hands-on learning experience that taught lifelong lessons.

Also illustrated in this comment, student-teachers stressed the educational value and professional skills they gained. A former student-teacher who is now pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Criminal Justice continued to stress these educational values:

Some of the skills I have gained are the ability to organize and lead discussions, the confidence to share my thoughts and ideas in a group forum, and to develop relevant and clear lectures. These skills have been useful to me as a new graduate student.

Clearly, this student-teacher was able to use this experience teaching in prison to further her/his own education.

Apart from these positive themes, student-teachers also stressed a number of difficulties they encountered. In particular, student-teachers emphasized that, at times, the prisoner-students seemed hesitant to write papers and participate in class discussions that were critical of the U.S. correctional system. This hesitation among the convicts is not surprising, considering the “radical power dichotomy” (Carceral, Rose, Richards, & Bernard, 2008) that exists within the social structure of the prison environment. After all, they are prisoners with no rights of self expression.

To resolve these issues, students-teachers worked to foster a classroom culture where prisoners felt safe to express their thoughts and ideas that were relevant to the course material. Through their actions, the student-teachers attempted to show the prisoners-students that they were not replicating the radical power dichotomy that exists in prison life. Specifically, they tried to facilitate class discussion and foster a comfortable learning environment making it clear that they were there to teach the course material, not to inform staff on their criticisms of prison policies and/or procedures.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on these results, we argue that the ICCP produced a beneficial learning experience for both undergraduate students and inmates, and that both the university and prison should be able to continue offering this educational experience to students and prisoners for little, if any, costs to their budgets and current resource allocations. In the ICCP's present form, the prison staff will not be required to devote significant amounts of their time to facilitating the ICCP. The education director will only be required to recruit prisoners, and assign one classroom once a week for a two-hour period over the course of the semester. Furthermore, the use of criminal justice students as student-teachers will prevent the reallocation of university resources to maintain the program. Professors will not be required to teach the noncredit course;<sup>3</sup> rather they are required to direct internships.

We do suggest two new possible directions for future programs. First, it may be possible to develop connections with community correction centers and implement ICCP's at these agencies. As shown in our data, a number of prisoner-students could not take full advantage of the program due to the fact that their mandatory release dates were far off in the future. For these convicts, the program may have been an effective academic exercise, but it could not possibly help place them in a university setting in the immediate future and, as such, its impact on these prisoners may fade over time. By expanding versions of the program at community correction centers, we could reach a population that could almost immediately feel the effect of the program. Since convicts who serve time in a community correction center may have access to the community via day passes, a number of class sessions might actually be held at the university. Additionally, those who successfully complete the program could immediately enroll in a technical college or university prior to their mandatory release date.

Second, we might want to expand beyond the substantive material of convict criminology. As our data showed, prisoner-students felt that the topic may not be relevant to their future career choices. As such, we suggest more diversity in the substantive material covered. For instance, introductory topics in sociology, psychology, political science, and so on could also be included. The inclusion of varying topics would not only help address the concerns of the prisoner-students about the relevance of the topic, but it would also open up the program to the involvement of other liberal arts students who are studying topics that overlap with crime, corrections, and crime policy.

In light of the restrictions placed by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1993 and the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1994 on prisoners' ability to receive a college education and, ultimately, a reduced likelihood of recidivism (Messner, 2003; Welsh, 2002), an expansion

of the ICCP to other universities, prisons, and community corrections centers may help to alleviate some of the negative results of these legislative restrictions. The benefits that this program can potentially provide to convicts, prisons, university students, and surrounding communities may outweigh the minimal costs that it places on university and correctional budgets.

The ICCP was found to be one inexpensive and effective way to build a bridge from the prison to the university, and help address the lack of college education opportunities in correctional facilities. We found prison administrators to be receptive to the idea. The warden and prison education director offered a great deal of support in the development and maintenance of the ICCP. In part, such support may be due to the fact that these administrators are operating under a Department of Corrections mission statement that clearly promotes service to and a desire to maintain collaborative relationships with the community. State universities operate under similar mission statements, and are located in close proximity. Thus, collaboration between these two institutions to enhance prisoner's rehabilitation and education can be perceived by both institutions as part of their mission.

Such similarities can certainly provide a basis for the development of the partnerships that will be necessary to develop more ICCP's in other states. Another can likely be found in the established connections that may already exist between these two different institutions. Criminology, criminal justice, social work, and other academic departments are likely to supervise student internships at area prisons (i.e., working in the front office, assisting volunteer services, paralegal services, educational services, and so on). If university professors have already established good working relationship with prison administrators, it may be relatively easy for them to arrange a meeting to explore the possibility of implementing an ICCP. Through such partnerships between a local university and a local prison an innovative and inexpensive program can be established and maintained, which will introduce, invite, and help place prisoners in a university upon their release. At the same time, such a program can enhance the educational experiences of the more traditional criminal justice student by providing them with a unique educational opportunity.

## NOTES

1. This concern about prisoners getting a "free ride" may not be warranted since prisoners received less than one percent of the grants offered each year (Taylor, 2005).

2. The SIR is a scale used by Canadian Federal Parole Boards to predict a potential parolee's likelihood of recidivism on items relevant to the offender's risk level, such as offense type, number of offenses, family situation, and so on. This device has been in use since 1982 in Canada and has been found to be a valid predictor of recidivism for a variety of types of offenders. The SIR is used in federal parole decisions and has also been used by the Correctional Service of Canada to evaluate other programs.

3. The coordinating professors, however, have typically involved themselves in course delivery via guest lectures and presentations. We anticipate that this will continue.

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