

THE CASE FOR EXPANDING HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON



Education as a Human Right

HEP develops the dignity, sense of self, and social relationships of people who are incarcerated. According to the UN Human Rights Council, education “should be a fundamental concern in detention” because learning fulfills human development, and respecting human rights implies “respect for the individual, in his actuality and also in his potential.”



HEP as Cost Effective

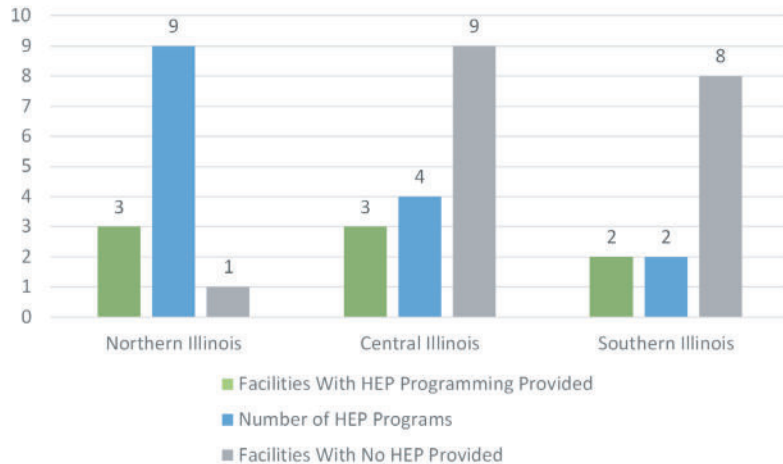
According to a study done by Department of Policy Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, prison education is “almost twice as cost effective as mass incarceration.” Moreover, according to Northwestern University, a different study found that “for every \$1 invested in prison education, taxpayers save \$4-\$5 in re-incarceration costs during the first three years post-release.”



HEP as Racial Equity

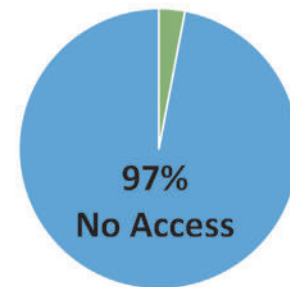
HEP can increase racial equity by providing schooling to populations that are unrepresented in higher education. While as of 2018, Black students represented only 13.4% of college students overall, they comprised 30% of Second Chance Pell students, a pilot program that funds selected HEP programs.

Current State of HEP in Illinois by Region



At the moment, HEP programming is predominantly in the northern Illinois region, and many of the prisons in the central and southern regions of the state lack programming.^{1 & 2}

Percentage of Incarcerated Individuals in IDOC Without HEP Access



Less than 3% of individuals incarcerated in IDOC have the opportunity to enroll in HEP programming. This means that of the roughly 29,200 individuals incarcerated in IDOC, only around 900 have access to HEP programming.³

¹ Education at Illinois, 2021. “2021 Directory Higher Education Programs in Illinois Correctional Programs”.

² Education at Illinois, 2021. “2022 Directory Higher Education Programs in Illinois Correctional Centers”.

³ Ewulomi Marsheda, and Ashton Hoeselton, 2021. Higher Education in Prison.

⁴ Gibbons, Alexandra and Rayshawn Ray, 2021. The Societal Benefits of Postsecondary Prison Education

⁵ Northwestern University, 2023. Northwestern Prison Education Program.