The Scholar-Practitioner

May 2024

NC HP

National Conference for Hidden Student Populations

nchp@okstate.edu

https://nchp.okstate.edu

Current Hidden College Student Populations

May include those who have foster care histories, justice-involved experiences, who are survivors of sexual violence or sex workers, recovering substances addicts, who face housing insecurity, who are considered Third Culture Kids/Individuals, who have sought/seeking abortion care, or who have undergone or are in the process of gender reassignment.

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The Scholar-Practitioner is a monthly publication of research summaries that targets the research-to-practice-to-research gap for U.S. scholar and practitioner advocates for hidden college student populations.

This publication reinforces the work of the **National Conference for Hidden Student Populations** (**NCHP**) by providing a space to share research applications for practice. **NCHP** was the first research conference dedicated to this multidisciplinary area of study.

The **NCHP 5th conference** will be held February 19 - 21, 2025, at Arizona State University. <u>Call for proposals</u> is now open!

Serving the Underserved: Formerly Incarcerated Students and Support Services

Caskey, R., & Price-Williams, S. (2023). Serving the Underserved: Formerly Incarcerated Students and Support Services. Journal of College Academic Support Programs, 6(1), 13. https://doi.org/10.58997/fa1

More than 10,000 people are released from U.S. prisons each week, with 650,000 released each year (United States Department of Justice, 2020). Upon release, reentry citizens have an increased likelihood of facing unemployment, homelessness, poverty, untreated mental health challenges, and stigmatization (Moore et al., 2016). Formal education for formerly incarcerated people, also referred to as reentry students, produces many individual and community benefits, including reduced recidivism (Hope, 2018), lessened need for public health services (Cooke, 2004; Sheehan, 2018), strengthening of communal bonds (Lagemann, 2016), and a general reduction in risky behavior (Sheehan, 2018). Despite evidence indicating education's positive impact, there is a dearth of literature on effectively serving reentry students.

The purpose of this study was to identify formerly incarcerated students' expectations of community collegiate success and determine their perspective on the effectiveness of college experiences in relation to that success. This research aims to assist college administrators to more effectively deliver resources to serve this population.

The study explored one primary and two secondary research questions to gain an understanding of the experiences of formerly incarcerated students in community colleges.
- What services do formerly incarcerated college students find most beneficial in addressing their learning needs, employment, and community reintegration?
  - What factors are necessary for formerly incarcerated college students to determine college support services as beneficial?
  - Considering learning needs, employment, and community reintegration, where do reentry students assess their greatest area of need for support?

This is a qualitative study conducted through a phenomenological lens. All participants were formerly incarcerated in a prison and were enrolled in a community college. Of the five interviewees, four were male and one female. All participants identified as White. They were between the ages of 31 and 62 with incarceration times ranging from 6 months to 30 years. Two participants were pursuing their Associate of Arts degree; the other three were enrolled in the Associate of Science: Addiction Studies program.

Results showed formerly incarcerated students felt personal responsibility for success when applying for college. However, upon matriculation, each student found themselves faced with many of the challenges below.

Lack of skills in using modern technology. This was the greatest issue indicated, as updated technology is scarce in prisons. Reentry citizens lack the know-how to navigate the increasingly computer-based processes required to attend college.

Administrative challenges. Among other challenges, students had trouble proving Florida residency, a process that reduces tuition costs by approximately 75%.

Absence of quiet study space. Reentry students often experience housing insecurity, complicated family situations, and irregular work hours. Typical study spaces may not be available to suit student needs.

Scarceness of active learning. Active learning activities are assignments that encourage students to interact through dialogue, discussion, etc. Each participant noted this as their primary source of connection.

Advisor unfamiliarity. Formerly incarcerated students face unique complications and can waste a lot of time and money if they are not working with an informed staff member.

This research provides several implications for practice. College administrators should consider,

Expanding existing technology education programs to be ongoing and inclusive of all levels of experience. Additionally, laptop or hotspot rental programs provide access to technology off campus.

Examining processes for accessing their institution. Administrative impracticality can stagnate a student's motivation and deter them from enrolling. Considering a streamlined process ensures a clear path for timely matriculation. Collegiate consortiums and connecting with local nonprofits can further support this process.

Extending study space operating hours to provide students greater access to a safe, quiet space.

Training faculty to create active learning courses with content sensitive to a reentry student's background. Allsop et al. (2020) found active learning courses increase student engagement, participation, and learning.

Educating advisors on common reentry student needs, such as employment licensing restrictions. Inviting a graduated formerly incarcerated student or a representative from a non-profit organization can provide insight into various student needs. Arming advisors with the tools and understanding to provide tangible support will give students more confidence to disclose their past.

This study had limitations which should be noted. These include the limited size of the study, lack of racial diversity, limitation of participants to one community college, and COVID-19 forcing many classes online. Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the current research about formerly incarcerated students providing practical, implementable implications. As colleges become increasingly diverse, it is vital college administrators pay attention to this distinct population and their unique needs.

References

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NCHP

Save the date! **Feb 19 - 21, 2025**
Arizona State University
Call for Proposals **NOW OPEN!**

Team Leader - Become a team leader of a multidisciplinary research team. Deadline October 1, 2024 (notifications by November 1)

Team Member - Become a new multidisciplinary research team member. Deadline October 31, 2024 (notifications by December 1)

Presentations - Present an original empirical work or practice. Deadline January 10, 2025 (notifications by January 21)

PDQs - Lead a think tank discussion. Deadline January 10, 2025 (notifications by January 21)

More information: nchp.okstate.edu

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