

# WI DOC Prison Education Program Request for Information

## To be a Prison Education Program

SUBMISSION DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred DOC Facility/Facilities: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Accrediting Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Please address the items below in support of your request for consideration to be an approved Prison Education Program (PEP). This is the first step, in a three-step process, to become eligible to administer Pell grants under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. If accepted, your school will be eligible to move to the second step in the process of receiving approval to administer federal Pell grants. If you are not accepted, you may submit a new application in the future.

PEP institution responses to this RFI may be used by the Department in determining available options to meet the postsecondary education needs of Individuals. The Department may use the information obtained to pursue direct negotiation of a contract or agreement with one or more Institutions.

This RFI is neither an offer nor a request to contract. This RFI does not obligate the Department to contract, issue a competitive solicitation, or take any action toward procuring services. The Department reserves the right to explore all options in its efforts to provide quality postsecondary education programs to Individuals, including but not limited to, options that are brought to its attention through this RFI. This RFI shall not be construed to create an obligation or commitment on behalf of the Department or any Institution.

The first several questions on this application will be used to ascertain if your proposed PEP program will meet the required "Best Interests of the Students" criteria established in the FAFSA Simplification Act of 2020 and subsequently codified through US Department of Education regulation. The subsequent questions are designed to ascertain your plans, needs, and preferred location, enabling the WI DOC to consider the totality of the circumstances surrounding your proposed program. As the designated "Oversight Entity," WI DOC will gather feedback from relevant stakeholders in a documented process.

In submitting this request, you are agreeing to be reviewed by WI DOC and relevant stakeholders after two years of operation for compliance with the "Best Interests of the Student" criteria, and to be reviewed at least 120 days in advance of each subsequent renewal of your college's Program Participation Agreement with the US Department of Education, in addition to complying with any other reporting requirements defined by DOC, as required by statute or regulation.

April 17: Publication

June 1: Due date for responses.

June 30: Acceptance letters sent.

The WI DOC may elect to seek further clarification in any, all, or none of the following formats:

- Request for a virtual or in person interview.
- Request for clarification of written answers.
- Request to re-submit portions or entire document.

Each question below can be answered in the simplest form necessary as determined by the proposers but may not exceed 22 total typed pages for all questions (average of 2 pages per question) in 12-point font using standard margin settings. "Institution" is the College and/or University. "Site" is the DOC prison. "Student" is an incarcerated person taking courses.

If a respondent does not have a current process for the question, please provide a narrative about the plan to understand the request and provide the service (if at all).

### **Best Interest Determination**

1. Tell us about the faculty that will be teaching in your PEP. Describe how you will ensure that the experience, credentials, and rates of turnover or departure of instructors for the HEP are substantially similar to other programs at the institution, accounting for the unique geographic and other constraints of prison education programs. How will you recruit similar faculty to teach in the prison? Will the same faculty teach in prison and on campus? Will you engage existing faculty or known adjunct faculty, or will you be recruiting new instructors for the prison courses?
2. Tell us about the courses and credentials you will be offering. What programs do you intend to deliver as a PEP? What are the modalities of teaching you intend to implement? When you use terms such as online, hybrid, etc., please explain precisely how you define those terms as it relates to student experience. How will students with enough time left on a sentence complete the degree? How will you support students who start a degree but are transferred or released prior to completion? How do you view the role of competition between other colleges providing educational services at the same DOC facility? In what ways will you work together in that scenario? In what ways will competition challenge your college program? How will it help your program?
3. Tell us about your academic and career advising. Describe how you will ensure that your PEP will offer relevant advising services to participating incarcerated individuals - while they are confined or incarcerated, in advance of reentry, and upon release - that is substantially similar to offerings to a student who is not incarcerated and who is enrolled in, and may be preparing to transfer from, the same institution, accounting for the unique geographic and other constraints of prison education programs. For example: What time, space, or staff would you need to have available to replicate these services to make them substantially similar at the prison location?
4. Transfer/Release of students: Describe the actions your institution will take:
  - a) To facilitate course and credit transfer by collaborating with other institutions of higher education (IHE) that offer college programming within Wisconsin prisons.
  - b) Describe, generally, your articulation agreements with other IHE's in WI

- c) To routinely advise and inform potential and current students about how the coursework they complete and credits they earn may transfer to another institution of higher education in Wisconsin.
- d) To work within and across IHEs to develop intentional credential pathways for people who are currently or formerly incarcerated.
- e) To articulate of credential pathways for individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated.
- f) To ensure that people returning home from carceral settings will be allowed to attend campus courses.

## **Funding**

Background: Fees and tuition are directed by legislative action and college business process. DOC policy indicates that charges for programs shall not be assessed to the DOC or to persons in our care (PIOC). Our responsibility is to ensure students have adequate funds to cover expenses and are not charged for services they cannot access. Most Tuition and fee structures are not adequate to fund all expenses.

5. Provide a budget outline to support all student costs required to sustain the HEP for at least 5 years. To what degree do you agree to the following items.
  - a) Colleges and universities (institutions) must provide to DOC's Central Office an annually updated, line item list of all student charges and fees, broken down by tuition and non-tuition fees. Each public institution shall provide the tuition costs established by the state legislature and/or governing bodies of the college. For private/non-profit institutions, please provide tuition costs provided by your governance bodies. Any costs above and beyond the statutory amount shall be detailed in a line-item report for tuition and all associated fees. Provide a model example of how you would comply with this requirement.
  - b) All Financial Aid (FA) communications must include, in writing, disclosure to students any rules about FA, including, but not limited to, lifetime capacity for FA. Provide a model example of how you would provide this information to PIOC's.
  - c) Colleges and universities (institutions) must include an estimate, annually of the breakout of costs by credit load for the student generally. Students who take between 6 and 14 credits each incur different fees and tuition costs. A breakdown of costs for each level of credit acquisition should be included. Provide a model example of how you would provide this information annually to DOC.

## **Support in FA and Additional Funding**

Background: Pell allocations increase annually but rarely cover all associated costs. Students can, and do, have family income that require adjustments for EFC while families simply don't contribute.

6. Because DOC and PIOC cannot contribute to the cost of service and are not eligible for student loans, describe how your college plans to address shortfalls between student tuition and fees and expected Pell grant allocation awards. In your response, please indicate your acknowledgement (yes/no) that you are aware of and have capacity to address the challenges below that support the FA and funding process.
  - a) Colleges/Universities (institutions) must provide a specific financial aid student email address to which questions and concerns can be directed and paper-based applications and verification

forms can be received and processed. These email accounts are monitored by DOC staff for the FA and college application process.

- b) Colleges/Universities must develop a plan on how it will supplement available Pell money to provide, at no cost to the students and/or DOC, for tuition and fees.
- c) Colleges/Universities (institutions) must provide one virtual FA training session annually as close as possible to any Department of Education (ED) rules adjustments for the upcoming academic year for DOC site coordinators and staff. Each training must include:
  - a. A specific outline of how to establish and verify DOC student identity.
  - b. A specific outline of any changing financial aid policies, procedures, or processes.
  - c. Dispersible information outlining the type of aid being used on the students' behalf and the impact of future financial aid eligibility (e.g., 12 semester limit on Pell Grant funds, W.H.E.G. funding, tribal benefits, G.I. bill options, etc.).
  - d. The training shall be coordinated with DOC Advisory Board and include all college partners at the same session.
- d) Colleges/Universities (institutions) must provide continual access to a singular point of contact for FA Specialists throughout the semester to which site coordinators and students can direct questions or concerns.

### **Support for Prospective and Active Students.**

7. Briefly describe the process that students undergo to become FA eligible, apply and enroll in college, and the supports you provide to ensure they are successful. Name and/or describe unique challenges to these processes for incarcerated individuals and how your college intends to provide support to overcome those challenges. Please speak explicitly to the topics below.
  - a) FAFSA application
  - b) Tutoring
  - c) Access to instructor office hours
  - d) Support for students returning home.

### **Technology Use**

8. How will you use technology to enhance student experience? What knowledge do you have about the barriers of use within DOC? How will you plan to overcome those barriers? NOTE: This is meant to serve as a launching point for selected partners training and discussion.

### **Instructional Supports**

9. Share how you will onboard your first or next group of students, including what type of admissions process, requirements and orientation you would like to conduct.
10. The DOC has articulated the following requirements for college partners. Please articulate your willingness to provide the services outlined. Where applicable, provide strategies you will employ that differentiate you from other college partners in these areas.
  - a) All students must be offered an accurate mid-semester progress report by receiving a letter grade for each enrolled course at the approximate halfway point of each semester. All student

assignments submitted prior to the approximate halfway point of each semester must be graded and included in the mid-semester progress report subject to penological based situations.

- b) All academic honor recipient names and grade point averages must be reported to the Department of Correction's (DOC) Central Office within two months of each semester's end date.
- c) Once per academic year, the college (institution) must report to the DOC's Central Office a comparison rate of the total number of DOC students earning academic honors as compared to all equivalent non-DOC students within the same program (or all of campus).
- d) All submitted student assignments must be graded within the timeframe outlined in the college's policy guidelines.
- e) Colleges/Universities must provide a conduit for concerns from students and/or site coordinators to mitigate grade reporting challenges from individual instructors.
- f) Colleges/Universities (institutions) must offer two, 1-hour virtual English/Humanities based tutoring sessions per week to be administered by a tutor provided by the college (institution).
- g) Colleges/Universities (institutions) must offer two, 1-hour virtual Math/Science based tutoring sessions per week to be administered by a tutor provided by the college (institution).

11. Why is your college/university/organization (or partnership) **interested in starting (or continuing) a postsecondary education in prison program** within the WI Department of Corrections?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this request for information. By submitting this you affirm that your institution and proposed programs meet the eligibility requirements of a Higher Education in Prison program as detailed in the government regulations [2022-23078.pdf \(govinfo.gov\)](#). You also recognize that there is an initial two-year approval process to ensure the best interest of students are being met.

Please print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED FORM WITH ANY SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION TO:**

**Ben Jones**  
**Director of Education, DAI**  
**3099 E Washington Ave.**  
**Madison, WI 53704**  
[benjaminw.jones@wisconsin.gov](mailto:benjaminw.jones@wisconsin.gov)