

Inside/Out College Program Executive Summary for Challenge Award

Overview:

The Imperial County Inside/Out College Program provides unique, higher educational opportunities for incarcerated and community college students in a classroom setting to explore sociological issues through activities, assignments and projects.

Challenge:

The 2011 Public Safety Realignment Act (AB109) resulted in major changes to the California criminal justice system, requiring all qualifying low level offenders convicted of non-serious, non-violent, and non-sexual offenses to serve their sentences at the county level rather than in state prison. California counties face on-going challenges associated with providing educational programming and rehabilitative services to offenders. According to a 2014 RAND Corporation study entitled "How Effective is Correctional Education, and Where Do We Go from Here?," inmates who participate in correctional education programs have a 43% lower chance of recidivating and 13% higher chance of obtaining post-release employment than those not enrolled in educational classes. The Inside/Out College Program (Program) provides inmates with an opportunity to begin college classes prior to release, increasing the likelihood of these individuals continuing a higher education experience upon release.

In Imperial County, there are demonstrated needs to improve educational achievement. According to recent statistics, the rate of adults over age 25 lacking a high school diploma in Imperial County is 12.7% compared to 8.2% statewide. Only 78% of high school students passed the California High school Exit Exam (CAHSEE) compared to 83% statewide. The percentage of students taking the SAT for college admission is 33% vs. 40% statewide.

Providing individuals serving time in local jails with college level coursework is viewed as a desirable step in improving overall educational outcomes in the Imperial Valley. However, ongoing competition for resources has impacted the ability of many public agencies to provide those services. By joining forces, the three agencies that support the Program are able to share resources to improve public safety through education and re-entry services to a historically underserved population.

Innovative Solution and Costs of the Program:

The Imperial County Inside/Out College Program was established in 2014 through the collaborative efforts of the Imperial County Sheriff's Office, the Imperial County Probation Department, the Imperial County Community Corrections Partnership and Imperial Valley College. The Program was designed to provide higher educational opportunities for "inside" students (incarcerated at the county jail) and "outside" students (from the local community college campus); creating a classroom environment that emphasizes dialogue and critical thinking. The program is modeled after the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program developed and designed by Lori Pompa of Temple University in 1997.

The Program is among the first programs in California providing college courses for inmates incarcerated at a county jail. The idea to create such a program involving inmates was initiated

by Imperial Valley College and has received significant support from both the Sheriff's Office and Probation. Students are eligible for the California Board of Governors Grant which waives typical college enrollment fees. The Imperial County Sheriff's Office Inmate Trust Fund pays for the inmate's student fees, textbooks and supplies. In addition, the Sheriff's Office provides each "inside" student with a distinctive polo shirt to wear in class, reinforcing their participation and commitment to the program. During class, students use only first names to protect the identity of all participants. As inside students are released from custody, collaborative efforts are initiated to assist the offenders in the continuation of their education, vocational training, and job placement.

At the conclusion of each semester, both inside and outside students participate in a graduation ceremony and luncheon at the Day Reporting Center, where the classes are held. Each student is presented with a certificate, and honored by a large audience made up of representatives from the Courts, Law Enforcement, the Community College District, Probation, and family members. The ceremony features speakers chosen from the students themselves, and is designed to reinforce the continued interest on the part of inmates in finishing college.

The Results/Success of the Program:

The results and success of the Inside/Out College Program is measured by the attainment of the program goals. The following are the results of goal attainment after the completion of the Fall, 2014 college course:

- All students successfully completed the Fall, 2014 course with a of grade B or better.
- 93% of the inside students received an A in the course, while 56% of the outside students received an A.
- 23 students completed pre/post surveys regarding the value of education.
- All students, inside and out, indicated in both surveys that education was very important for the attainment of personal goals.
- All students indicated that they had a positive educational experience.
- 60% of the inside students released after completing the Fall 2014 Inside/Out course are continuing their education at Imperial Valley College and preparing for employment.

Additional Information:

Here is a link to a moving video created by our most recent Spring 2016 class:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/rej3awm6grskwcg/%23Life%20Video.mp4?dl=0>.

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