

**Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority**

**HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON TASK FORCE**

**Minutes**

HJR27

Thursday, May 5, 2022

12:00 PM to 1:30 PM

Location

Via WebEx Video Conference/Teleconference

**Attendees**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task Force Member Attendance** | **Present (VIDEO)** | **Telephone** | **Absent** |
| Orlando Mayorga, Chair | X |  |  |
| Rep. Carol Ammons | X |  |  |
| Sen. Terri Bryant |  |  | X |
| Sen. Kimberly Lightford |  |  | X |
| Yaacov Delaney | X |  |  |
| Director Rob Jeffreys, IL Dept. of Corrections (IDOC) |  |  | X |
| Dr. Lynne Mock, ICJIA | X |  |  |
| Dr. Eric Lichtenberger, IL Board of Higher Education | X |  |  |
| Nathan Wilson, IL Community College Board | X |  |  |
| Antoinette Burton, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana | X |  |  |
| Sarah Ross, Art Institute of Chicago |  |  | X |
| Dr. Quintin Williams, The Joyce Foundation |  |  | X |
| Dr. Rebecca Ginsburg, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana | X |  |  |
| Gwyneth Troyer, John Howard Association of Illinois |  |  | X |
| Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas |  |  | X |

Sarah Ross joined the meeting after roll call.

**Also present were:**

Miranda Gillis-Lead (Proxy for Sen. Lightford), Senior Advisor and Communications Specialist

Emma Holzhauer (Proxy for Rep. Carol Ammons), Support Staff

Alyssa Williams, IDOC

James Pagano, IDOC

Maria Miller, IDOC

Ashton Hoselton, Education Justice Project

Jaquelyn Gilbreath, ICJIA Research Analyst

Crystal Johnson, ICJIA, Office of the General Counsel

Sharon Varallo, Augustana College

Stephanie Schmitz-Bechteler, ISAC

Susan Giberson

Yasmin Khashpour

Douglas Otto, ICJIA Research Analyst

Katie Piper

Janelle Washington

Gregory Gaither

Mary Ellen Mastorelli

**A. Call to Order and Roll Call**

 1. Chair Mayorga called the meeting to order at 12:06 PM

 2. Crystal D. Johnson took roll

 3. Quorum was established

**Old Business**

**B. Motion to Approve the Agenda for May 5, 2022 (Voice Vote)**

* 1. Moved by Dr. Lynne Mock
	2. Seconded by Rep. Carol Ammons
	3. All were in favor
	4. No oppositions
	5. No abstentions
	6. Motion passed

**C. Motion to Approve the Meeting Minutes for April 8, 2022 (Voice Vote)**

1. Moved by Rep. Carol Ammons
2. Seconded by Dr. Lynne Mock
3. All were in favor
4. No oppositions
5. No abstentions
6. Motion passed

**D. Member proposed agenda items:**

1. Chair Mayorga asked members to contact him regarding items to be placed on the agenda. He stated once items are approved, the information will go to ICJIA to finalize the agenda for posting. He told members that they have until July 31st of this year to submit recommendations for the final report.

**New Business**

**1.** **Presentation: What is APEP Sharon Varallo, PhD., Executive director of the Augustana**

 **Prison Education Program (APEP)**

1. Chair introduced Sharon Varallo and read her bio to the task force.
2. Introduction: Sharon Varallo provided information and asked that the committee believe program directors and that non-credit baring courses be classified as education. She stated non-credit baring college courses reduce recidivism and improve prison environments for incarcerated persons and staff by reducing violence and increasing dignity and hope.
3. What is APEP?
	1. Launched in 2021, the Augustana Prison Education Program (APEP) is a full-time liberal arts Bachelor of Arts degree program offered to incarcerated students at the East Moline Correctional Center. Students take Augustana coursework from the same Augustana faculty who teach on Augustana’s main campus. APEP is modelled after the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI) and is a proud member of the BPI Consortium. It was featured in the Ken Burns series, “College Behind Bars.” The program was started with generous seed funds from the Austin E. Knowlton Foundation. The US Department of Education has designated APEP as a Second Chance Pell program and the Higher Learning Commission has approved APEP as an accredited location of Augustana College.
	2. All classes take place in person at the East Moline Correctional Center. Faculty undergo security clearances to be able to enter the facility. Though internet access currently is not available, APEP is in discussion with the Illinois Department of Corrections to install a computer lab; computer equipment has been funded with a grant from the Bard Prison Initiative. In the meantime, students write assignments longhand. The library is being built book by book. APEP received a 1 million dollar grant form the Milton Foundation and is a liberal arts degree granting program that just finished it’s first year.
	3. APEP plans to offer admission to a new cohort annually. Next year they have funding for 24 students. Admissions was based on a two-hour timed essay and a personal interview.
	4. The 2021 cohort size was limited by physical distancing requirements. Ten men were accepted into APEP and began coursework in August, 2021. Typical annual cohorts are planned for 18-20 students. Seven out of 10 men finished the program and one student was released to Lawndale ATC. The seven students made the Dean’s List.
	5. APEP’s sentence length would ideally be for individuals with 6-8 years left on their sentence. The time it takes to review scholarly material takes from 1 day to 7 weeks. Student driven research topics take time because it is 10 students with 10 different research topics. We have no trouble with text books.
	6. East Moline has a part-time EFA and eventually we will have a full time EFA. Additional solutions include secured databases designed. Springfiled could install JSTOR on computers, and incarcerated students could submit their own research to IDOC staff and it is free.
4. Questions & Answers for Sharon Varallo:
	1. Rebecca Ginsburg asked Rebecca Sharon is this program scalable? Should more space or funding be made available? How large can it realistically get?
	2. Ms. Varallo responded we will be able to be self sustaining, and we could have a new cohort of 16 to 18-20 students each year on a typical year. We were approved as a 2nd, chance pell site in the 3rd review that just went through. So, we could start as early as July and so that means that we can be self supporting. Money is not the problem. It is the space, we've had money to buy computers, which I've been trying to do for over a year. That's not the issue, in our situation. We definitely, are getting pushed back even to get a 2nd classroom. We are offering them best education that it is possible for Augustana college to give and we might not even get a 2nd classroom next year. There’s tons of empty space, and I think Tim's going to speak to this point.There's a whole floor in education building that is available but we've had some pushback on classroom space and money's not the issue. It is just access.
	3. Ms. Ginsburg clarified her question and stated I want to know because 1 of the things we're speaking about is expanding access. So, give us a sense in some programs by design they're meant to only cater to 30 students a year or 40 students a year. Is your program. Designed to for a sweet spot. Or is it possible if all 600 people at Illinois favorite qualified with your program be able to support 600 people?
	4. Ms. Varallo responded No. Our program is designed to be like it is, and I was going to college, which is high intensity, immersive pedagogy. And that means, you know, our classes are not going to be huge. We do some distance, education, have small classes in person instruction and we are incredibly open to working with lots of different programs and can think outside the box and all kinds of different ways. I think that's super important of course in this environment but we imagine at most, probably when we're at full time capacity, 80 to 100 students. We are 8 miles down the road from East Correctional center. That is the facility where we will be able to make this happen. All of our faculty, our senior, our regular Augustana faculty, it's a part of their load, and they teach 1 of the courses instead of teaching it on the main campus. They drive 9 miles down the street and teach it at the prison. We couldn't operate anywhere else andwe wouldn't be changing our mission that's what we do. We know how to do that. We have, you know, we've developed pedagogy, so that the 1st year is the is the foundation. It's the concrete is the foundation for any major after that and, that's where we teach all of the designed teaching research skills, for example, that I talked about withneeding research materials. That's critical. That's critical to everything and and right now We are, I'm trying to anticipate like,10 different possible research topics, and I sharing books and bringing them in and waiting weeks and hoping that students will be able to get materials that they hand wrote 10 page papers and 2 classes already this year with multiple drafts, they wrote multiple drafts for me in 2 classes. They're doing the work but we need to be able to just give them the resources and there's safe ways to do so.
	5. Chair Mayorga asked if Augustana had been offered a rationale as to why they are unable to access available spaces?
	6. Ms. Varallo replied It's probably a staffing issue. There are whole, entire buildings, at East Moline Correctional Center right now that could hold up to nearly 1400 incarcerated individuals and it's under 400 right now. There’s whole buildings that are closed off and whole floors, but you know, for college in prison, we need space, we need at least a couple classrooms. It will probably happen, but it it is one of those things that it doesn't happen easily. There’s a wait until it's a crisis and there's a smarter way of operating than that.
5. Statement by Sharon Varallo submitted after May 5, 2022 meeting:

Dr. Sharon Varallo, Executive Director, Augustana Prison Education Program

Professor of Communication Studies

Violet M. Jaeke Chair of Family Life

Augustana College

Rock Island, IL

I’ll speak about four-year liberal arts colleges like Augustana College’s prison education program, but I ask that this committee please believe

us program directors when we say that non-credit bearing classes from programs such as

PNAP are critical to the educational ecosystem. One of IL-CHEP’s main concerns is that they

be classified as “education” in IDOC’s decision-making. While it is true that Augustana Prison

Education Program likely would not exist without such opportunities, that is not the main reason

for their inclusion. Evidence suggests that all by themselves non-credit bearing college courses

reduce recidivism and improve prison environments for incarcerated persons and for prison staff

by reducing violence and increasing hope. “Ecosystem” metaphor here is intentional; we really

do need many kinds of education in prison for the whole system to thrive.

Though Augustana faculty began teaching non-credit courses in 2018, both Augustana and

East Moline Correctional Center have experienced the steepest learning curve you can imagine.

Augustana has been “counted” by EMCC in three different ways in the past four years, with

different chains of command and procedures and spaces allotted to our programming.

Now, after receiving nearly a quarter-million dollar grant from the Knowlton Foundation,

Augustana Prison Education Program (APEP) is a full-time Liberal Arts BA-degree granting

program just finishing its first academic year. APEP is modelled after the Bard Prison Initiative

(which is featured in the Ken Burns and Lynn Novick docu-series College Behind Bars).

Descriptive materials were included in the link.

APEP started full-time in-person coursework in August 2021 to ten incarcerated students who

were admitted to Augustana after an admissions process of a two-hour timed written essay and

personal interview. Seven out of 10 students finished Fall semester with grades that made the

Dean’s List. One APEP student was recently released and a second just moved to work-

release at North Lawndale ATC. Both men are finishing their full-time spring semester

coursework as we speak and plan to finish their educations, hopefully on the Rock Island

campus.

There are many “on the ground” challenges of implementing higher ed in prison programs, such

as space, faculty security clearance delays, and the different sentence lengths that might “fit”

each program (APEP’s ideal is a remaining sentence length of 6-8 years but we operate in a

minimum-security facility with much of the population having much shorter times to release) but

here I’ll focus on concerns about TIME AND TECH.

First, TIME. The time it takes to approve educational materials—books, scholarly journal

articles, films --has ranged from 1 day to 6 weeks. And we are never sure how long it will

take. To be clear, we are not having a problem with textbook approvals. It’s the additional

material for student-driven research papers—10 students means 10 different research topics

just for one course. Nearly every Augustana course has some independent component that is

integral to deep learning --and this need for research material is only going to get even busier

from here on out. APEP has funding to enroll 24 students this fall. Our research needs are

going to triple.

East Moline Correctional Center has a part-time EFA. We are grateful to Chief Williams for

facilitating the hire of full-time EFAs for every prison facility and remain optimistic that those

hires will immediately help programs like ours that struggle with the speed of approvals for

educational materials. However, there are additional solutions to what is a bigger matter than

some might realize.

Safe, secure solutions exist such as in secure databases designed for college-in-prison

programs -- like the JSTOR academic research index –that Springfield could install on laptops

for any HEP computer labs. Approval times potentially could be decreased significantly,

incarcerated students could conduct their own research and submit their own research requests

directly to IDOC staff who could immediately see and approve/deny materials. Approvals could

be made at the facility level or the state level or anything in between. And it is free from the

nonprofit Ithaka S+R. This would be a massive improvement over our current practice and

could actually improve materials processing in every IDOC facility. If/when that sort of scholarly

database is allowed to be implemented, degree-granting programs can count on meeting their

missions of teaching students how to ask good questions, find good resources, evaluate them,

and decide on their own position on the matter. Incredible skill development is an outcome of

such activities and isn’t duplicated when we teachers just choose materials for students.

Secure Databases like JSTOR are just one possible solution. However we move forward,

please note that if the state of Alabama --as is rumored --can do educational material

clearances in two days, then Illinois can do it.

Second, Tech. Installing computer labs and software that safely allows access to academic

research is critical to our mission. [Note that we expressly do NOT mean tech for distance-

learning. After two years of Covid-induced K-12 distance education, nearly every American

knows that distance education is a poor substitute for in-person instruction and student

engagement. We really can do in-person higher ed in prison and it is worth the trouble by

nearly every metric.] The technology needed in prison classrooms is not only critical to

educational outcomes but is essential for enhanced job opportunities upon release and even for

basic reentry.

Here's the kicker: Without timely processing and access to technology in prison

classrooms such as exists in other states, Illinois risks losing out on the major

opportunity ahead of us with the opening of Pell grants to incarcerated learners. We all

predict that Pell availability will incentivize more institutions of higher education to start offering

college in prison, but those colleges and universities that could offer degrees will not get

approval from accrediting bodies or from the Department of Education if the education offered in

the prison is significantly different from or inferior to that offered on campus. I’ll repeat that:

Colleges and universities will not get approval from accrediting bodies and their students will not

qualify for Pell grants from the DOE if the education offered in the prison is significantly different

from or inferior to that offered on campus. That education even includes extra- and co-curricular

activities. On the letter accrediting East Moline Correctional Center as an additional site of

Augustana College, the Higher Learning Commission noted that we don’t yet have student clubs

in the prison. We need prisons to know that requests to allow clubs such as to build gardens,

play chess, start choirs – those activities are not optional to our accrediting bodies.

In-person courses, high-impact pedagogy, and student leadership opportunities—to students

who want education-- changes lives for the better every day.

On behalf of all involved with Augustana Prison Education Program, please know that the

challenges and bumps along the way have been eclipsed by seeing our students’ success. The

students are thriving. And on behalf of IL-CHEP, please know that many program directors are

happy to help other colleges get started.

The pool of talent in the HEP community in Illinois is broad and deep and it is known nationwide.

Illinois has everything it needs to be a leader in higher ed in prison. Explicitly valuing and

supporting all types of education, emphasizing in-person instruction, improving turnaround time

and access to technology can ensure Illinois can be known as a leader not just in the Midwest

but across the entire nation.

Thank you for your time.

**2. 2nd Presntation:Prison+Neighborhood Arts/Education Project Tim Barnett, Interim Director, Nontraditional Degree Programs Professor, English and Women's/Gender/Sexuality Studies Leadership Team, Prison+Neighborhood Arts/Education Project**

a. Chair introduced Tim Barnett and read his bio to the task force.

b. Mr. Barnett read his statement for the IL Higher Education in Prison Task Force:

**Timothy Barnett**

**Northeastern Illinois University**

**Prison+Neighborhood Arts/Education Project**

**May 5, 2022**

*Statement to the Illinois Task Force on Higher Education in Prison*

The Prison+Neighborhood Arts/Education Project (PNAP) helps students gain professional skills but also works with students and the community to ask how racism, poverty, and more affect life opportunities **and** how we might all do better, given the violence in the world many of us are victimized by and that many of us create, or ignore, or are swept into. In this view, education isn’t about helping the “least among us” but about understanding how we are all implicated in a system that doesn’t work and understanding education as one tool to help fix that system.

I appreciate this approach because of questions like the following that I hear over and over again from incarcerated students at Stateville Prison, who ask: How can we get the world to see us as human? And how can education help us demonstrate our humanity to the world?

Such questions remind me that prison education cannot only be about training people for work, as necessary as that is. Education everywhere**, but especially in prison,** must be a tool to help people succeed in the world as it is **and** a tool to help create a blueprint for a new world with less racial strife, less division, less poverty. Otherwise, we might find low-level jobs for lots of formerly incarcerated people (and high-powered positions for a few) but we will still continue down the same path we have traveled for 500 years. And that is unacceptable.

Educators in prison balance these things, the practical and the possible, every day. We are well aware, for example, of the value of degrees, but we also know that all acts of learning can change lives. And so, I believe strongly: If our goal is to make higher ed more available in Illinois prisons, we must not treat uncredited classes and programs differently from those with credits.

There are, for example, nontraditional programs like University Without Walls (UWW), a Northeastern Illinois University degree program Erica Meiners and I began at Stateville and which is run through PNAP. This program accepts learning gained outside of formal schooling—from uncredited classes, for example—as part of a student’s degree program. In fact, there is a whole movement in higher ed—called Prior Learning Assessment—that recognizes the knowledge gained by artists, business people, social workers and others who may not have one college credit but who have deep reservoirs of learning that deserve recognition.

I may be wrong, but I believe UWW is the only Illinois program to have graduated incarcerated students with BA degrees in recent years. And we do that because we provide opportunities through uncredited classes and think tanks to help students gain college-level knowledge. UWW is unique in many ways, but colleges throughout Illinois offer credit for experiential learning—and more learning of any kind in Illinois prisons **will** lead to degrees, which is, of course, a good thing. It just can’t be the only thing we focus on or we will lose out.

Uncredited classes are also important because it is hard to get colleges to bring classes with credits and full-fledged degree programs to prisons right off the bat. Most degree programs grow out of small efforts. PNAP started with two people, Sarah Ross and Erica Meiners, with almost no institutional support. From the start, PNAP faculty committed to rigorous college-level learning, but to this day, we offer primarily uncredited college classes at Stateville—five per semester and three in the summer along with a think tank. Because of those uncredited classes, we have graduated eight with BA degrees, with five scheduled to graduate in December and ten new students coming into the program this summer. Students also tell us that the culture of learning PNAP has helped create at the prison has cut down on violence and offered hope to those with long sentences—and that has to be worth **something**.

PNAP’s art classes also provided a flexible space to create a mural requested by IDOC’s Camille Lindsay in the wake of George Floyd’s murder. A rigid academic structure wouldn’t have allowed such a project that, in spite of its lack of college credit, provided significant learning for students and will help one of the artists, Juan Luna, earn his bachelor’s degree through UWW. However, once the PNAP artists finished the mural, they were told that people with long terms, including them, would soon be transferred from Stateville. At this announcement, many of the artists felt devalued, dehumanized by a system that used their talents when it was helpful but refused to listen when they asked to continue growing and learning with the communities they had developed at Stateville.

These men and others with long terms at Stateville have been trailblazers who have helped renew higher ed in Illinois prisons. And all the extraordinary students with long terms working with Northwestern, North Park, DePaul, NEIU, and PNAP, should not be shunned because of their success.

And that is another significant issue: education for all with **no** red line separating those who “deserve” education from those who don’t. As promised, many Stateville students with long sentences were transferred recently—at least one had been accepted into our degree program but now cannot enroll because of the move.

Instead of moving people out of Stateville, though, we should encourage every college and university in Illinois to offer uncredited classes. Educators want to be involved, and with some support, new initiatives will blossom if faculty do not have to immediately deal with the red tape and tuition associated with credits (and, while the re-emergence of Pell grants will help with tuition, Pell creates new issues to address). New programs around the state mean that people with long terms can stay at Stateville. And some of these new programs will grow into credit-bearing programs, while, in the meantime, offering education with a value that cannot be measured by credits alone.

Higher ed is valuable for those with long terms for many reasons, including because families see education differently when their loved ones take college classes (credited or not). Students talk about children who see college as a legitimate option because their parents are succeeding in spite of prison’s trauma—and are gaining so much from their studies. One student talks about his family calling him for advice because he’s the college man in the family, the one who’s published his ideas, who has started organizations, who has helped create laws. I know of organizations who would be happy to hire him (and all of our graduates with long terms).

But the writing and the art these students create, the stories they want to share with young people, the legal and cultural knowledge they have developed (in part as a result of their long terms) should be valued because that knowledge offers all of us insight into the devastating effects of mass incarceration. And that kind of learning matters in ways that go far beyond employment.

Some assume education is wasted on those with long terms, but incarcerated students who inspire family members to attend school contribute powerfully to the greater good. And many students with long terms collaborate with outside academics and organizations to make a difference in the world. Many who were supposed to die in prison are out working, caring for their families, contributing to communities. As many get new trials because they were excessively sentenced as juveniles, tortured in custody, or wrongfully convicted, we must recognize that those with long sentences do leave prison—often—and have much to offer society, especially if they have been able to develop their talents.

In legal terms, people with long terms do have a viable liberty interest. And people with short terms can have their sentences lengthened if they run into issues while in prison. We can create red lines that value people with short terms over those with long terms, but those lines will never be fully accurate and, more important, they tie us to a world where some are seen as more human, more valuable, than others. And it is that way of thinking that has seen mass incarceration grow in devastating, profoundly racist ways—and seen it fail so miserably.

Two final comments.

Education must be supported when people return home. PNAP has established a Learning Fellows Program, which currently offers students $6,000 as they complete degrees at NEIU; in return, students offer workshops to the NEIU community about mass incarceration. This funding, however, is a drop in the bucket, and we need much more.

This effort, though, is a good reminder that higher ed in prison must **always** be understood in relation to college outside the walls. Questions like these matter: Can college students in prison enroll in the same institutions when they leave? Can they afford to? Do schools understand the needs of people returning home? I don’t feel good about the way I would answer these questions, and, while the task force may not address them all in detail, it is crucial to recognize the complicated relationships between higher ed in prison and higher ed in the “real world,” as tuition, race, status, class, application questions about a person’s background, and more can make college in the free world more challenging than in prison.

And finally. We are happy at Stateville to have the most college prison programs in Illinois. But we face challenges. For example, the prison tells us there is not enough space for all the programming we envision. And yet, empty rooms are everywhere, and the times we are allowed to teach are limited. When we cannot teach, classrooms sit, empty and idle. We recognize that the issue here is not really about space, but about staffing. We can’t use empty classrooms if there is no staff to provide security. It is about union contracts, and a tradition that sees education as an afterthought instead of a central force to be prioritized in correctional centers. The four programs at Stateville are ready to do more, but we are bound by artificial limits.

The four programs are also always treated separately, each with its own relationship to the prison. When our program and others have asked at Stateville to meet with prison administrators **and** the other programs so we can work together on a more wholistic educational system, we are put off, and I can only imagine that is because it is easier to maintain control when we are kept separate. It is time, though, to stop seeing educators as intruders or people who primarily need to be controlled and managed in prisons; we need to create new dynamics for collaboration among educators, prison administration and staff, **and** students, all of whom have much to offer to the educational process. Without new kinds of relationships, our efforts will be limited.

To conclude, I believe that education can help to humanize all of us—and not just those in prison. It is not just incarcerated students but all of us who have been dehumanized by the barbaric forms of punishment we have wedded ourselves to. But alternatives do exist and education that is practical **as well as** aspirational can help us find them.

c. Questions & Answers for Tim Barnett:

a. Sara Ross asked I just wonder if both, Tim and Sharon could speak to, another challenge that, I see from my own time going in and out both with the community college when I, taught for 6 years with the community college with, just challenges of faculty, clearance, faculty, orientation, the gate passes. These micro level things, but when I thought of the community colleges, there were days that the officers would be like, there's no gate pass. And I was, like, but I was just here 2 days ago, and there was a gate pass, and they would just be like sorry. And so, you know, I un-deterred I was I'll just teach my class with no materials and I did, but to Sharon's point, that is not parallel to what the community college can offer on the outside, you know and similarly at state, though, I think we've had different kinds of challenges,with orientations and faculty and, faculty getting there and they're like, we don't have your TV tests, but they do because,

so I'm just or I know that they had to go through a very lengthy orientation that was about,

issuing tickets, we don't issue tickets. We're not, correctional officers. I just wonder if you could kind of talk to that level the challenge the things that make it challenging and they've given us all a little bit more gray hair. Does that make sense?

b. Sharon Varallo replied the 1st faculty, the full term faculty for the APEP program, were required to undergo 40 hours of CEO training. I don't think that's going to happen anymore. I think we are the only ones and I think that there's just some growing pains. From my understanding, that would shut down college in prison program's all over the state. It's just, when you work full time, you can't ask somebody to take a week to learn how to call a riot on a radio that you'll never use. I do believe that it won't happen, but it does speak to something in the facility, in the whole state, the Illinois coalition is very supportive of one another. We're very diverse in our programs, but if something happens at one place, even though our experiences are different, we know that it could possibly happen to us. So there's just the sense of unpredictability all the time and that is hard to to run a professional program when you never know. I get that we're in a prison- It's your house, your rules I'm willing to follow those rules. I just need to know what they are and they vary from place-to-place tremendously. The security clearance delays for us, there are some one off things that were highly unusual but we had some faculty who were not able to teach. I was going to co-teach with a faculty member part-time.

I think the younger the faculty member, the less likely he seemed to be able to be approved, at least in, in my experience, because there's a lot more varied work history. So we had issues. I've been on Augustana one phone call gets me gets you 22 years of experience, but my Co teacher was just finishing her PhD and she had all these retail jobs in grad school and if one retail job doesn't call back to verify employment you're not teaching, so I taught that class by myself instead of with her, and so it's not a small thing sometimes. We have more of our African American faculty, our younger faculty, as well, we need to have diverse faculty teaching and that just didn't happen for no good reason.

**3. 3rd Presntation:** **Boston University’s Prison Education Program: A Legacy of Social Justice Mary Ellen Mastrorilli,** **Ph.D., Faculty Director**

a. Chair introduced Dr. Mary Ellen Mastrorilli and read her bio to the task force.

b. Dr. Mastrorilli presented her Power Point Presentation for the IL Higher Education in Prison Task Force:

a. Dr. Mastrorilli stated Elizabeth Baker was the founder of the Boston University Prison Education program. In 1969, as a BU professor, she took the University's team for television's popular quiz show, the GE College Bowl, to MCI-Norfolk, a medium-security prison, for a practice session against a team comprised of prisoners. Impressed by the intellectual abilities of the inmates and their interest in learning, Barker asked the University to sponsor college-level classes for the prisoners. She did not take no for an answer and in 1972, BU installed a new president, John Silber, who let Baker begin the program.

b. Students who participate in correctional education programs had a 43 percent lower odds of recidivating than those who did not. This translates to a reduction in the risk of recidivating of 13 percentage points. The odds of obtaining employment post-release among incarcerated individuals who participated in correctional education was 13 percent higher than the odds for those who did not participate in correctional education.

c. 54% of those who completed the program on campus did not have a single subsequent arraignment. Does not include dismissals, CWOF

d. Boston University revamped its entire,undergraduate curriculum it's called the “B U Hub” and it has a lot of, components to it and we realized that it would be difficult to implement those changes behind the walls of a secure prison. So, in its place, we adopted this undergraduate certificate program, and I went into both facilities, very fearful of a backlash. I was pleasantly surprised and even shocked. The program was met with open arms. I had many many individuals tell me that they were always interested in pursuing college courses, but that they thought the program was too long, too difficult to get into and really too difficult to even complete. When they saw the certificate option, they really embraced it and we are bringing in cohorts of undergraduate certificate students, one of the things that that we've always believed, not only at Metropolitan College, which is the college that houses prison education at B. U. we've always believed in accessibility. Especially for non traditional students and so my philosophy has been and I've been overseeing the program for about 2 years now, my philosophy has always been if you have a high school credential, and if you can write a halfway decent essay, you will get into this program. And that's exactly what happened.

We had 20 women apply at Framingham. They all got accepted and we had 60 men apply at EMC Norfolk. They all got accepted and I had to put 40 of them on the waiting list. And serendipitously what has happened is finally other schools and colleges, other universities, and colleges in the Boston area have started to offer programs in prisons. BU for the longest time has been the only show in town. The the way I look at it now is, I tell these students and potential students, you're going to have the opportunity to dip your toe into higher education learning, and you can earn an undergraduate certificate. Then if you want to pursue your education, if you're still behind the walls conquered, MTI now has a college program, Tufts University, Emerson College, and Boston College has now stepped up to offer, credit- bearing courses. And and I'm very happy about that. We've had almost over the years, 800students, not complete the program. The numbers are high due to transfer releases, deaths in custody with women. The retention rate is very low. They come into the system with very serious trauma that leads to psychiatric disorders that go untreated or undiagnosed. There are constellations of instability, among this population, inability to focus anxiety, depression, low self esteem, avoidance of social connection, lack of agency. Our instructors work very, very hard to keep them connected and, it's not unusual for me to get a an email like, “so and so's in the hole” so to speak. Well, I had one of those women come and meet with me this week and she's coming back into the certificate program. So we work as closely as we can with, all of our students. I'd like to say a little bit about the research. Thethe big daddy of all the research, has been the random meta analysis and if you're familiar with that, and if you're interested in higher education, I'm certainly sure you are their study was extremely rigorous.The findings were absolutely solid that students who participate in correctional education programs, had 43% lower odds of reciprocating than those who did not and, this translated to a reduction in the risk by 13 points.

e. Fifty-four percent of those who completed the program on campus did not have a single subsequent arraignment, which I think is, very, very promising. I've been working recently with a doctoral student, who just completed his defense, and he took a look at the Boston University program and this is from his unpublished dissertation where one chapter is devoted entirely to the Boston University program, and it focuses exclusively on twenty-one,formally incarcerated students who are now in the community and they participated in the Boston University program. One of his major findings is that, prison education, breaks the cycle of literal and figurative imprisonment and, it offers students space, unlike anything else found, , behind the walls. They take part in a community of mutual respect and mentorship. They're encouraged to explore personal interests. They develop skills, they regularly engage in non-coercive, non-prescriptive practices of self reflection and inquiry and if you have ever taught a prison education, course then you know this is true.

 Questions & Answers for Dr. Mastrorilli:

f. Eric Lichtenber asked could you provide a little more information on the funding mechanism?

g. Dr. Mastrorilli responded B U pays for everything they pay for the, tuition for the students, um, they pay for the books, the supplies from textbooks to pens and pencils be. BU pays, for the instructor stipends and BU also provides 10 scholarships for correctional employees,10 scholarships for a graduate degree for correctional employees. We believe that it's important not only to educate incarcerated individuals, but we know that the staff, have difficult jobs, having been a correctional employee myself for 24 years, I can speak to the difficulties of that. I think it's great that Boston University is supporting correctional employees as well. We pick up the tab for everything.

h. Sara Ross asked because BU picks up the tab for everything I'm wondering if you have state funding that you apply for for that, because we don't have access to certain kinds of state funding that the free world students have. Currently the programs outside of the community colleges, if I'm correct get, we are raised completely private funding from donors and et cetera.

Question 2 is, you know, just about kind of a recent situation, this happened with many of our programs at one prison and that is, the last 2 weeks we haven't had classes, they cancel classes, because there's not enough staff. There's a staff shortage, and I think it's about, prioritizing certain kinds of programs, et cetera. So, I'm just curious if you guys have experienced that kind of level of disruption of programming because of lack of staff? We all understand lockdowns and stuff like that. But just that kind of yeah prioritization of of what gets run. Can you can you speak to that?

h. Dr. Mastrorilli responded 1st, on the funding, BU is a private nonprofit institution we get no state funding at all. And as far as the, cancellation to the staffing, we have never experienced that we've experienced cancellation due to Covid and what we've done is packet learning, which is not desirable at all. I would not recommend it and in in the event that a class needs to be canceled what I tried to do was extend the semester out so those classes can be made up. My biggest headache is contact hours, we are supposed to go in once a week 3 hours, a class, and delays with staff entering and all of that,that we're very familiar with, most of the time the students aren't getting 3 hours and that bothers me so, I try to make up classes at the end of the semester.

**F. Members Updates**

1. Erich Lichtenberg stated I have a member update related to what we were discussing last week about potentially creating a sub committee. We consulted with Orlando offline, and we decided that we weren't going to create a subcommittee officially, but a, a few of us did get together. It was all according to the open meetings act and, and all of the restrictions placed upon us as a task force member. But because it was so few of us, we were able to have an informal discussion, but we thought it necessary to report back to you all regarding some of the things we discussed but it mostly surrounded or involved and focused on what what information we have available right now, and what we can do as a task force potentially in the future to make sure we have the mechanisms in place to collect the right information specific to some of the requests. The task force members, I met with with James from IDOC, he sits in on all of the meetings but he isn't an official task force member. We met with Gwyn Troyer as well, Nathan Wilson my, my counterpart at the community college board, Sharon Varallo who presented earlier from Augustana, Rebecca who's a task force member and Ashton Hoselton who I believe is involved on the higher ed side, but she is not a task force member. So a few of us got together and had an informal discussion. about data, and I think in the end what was decided is that we need more information right now on some demographic information regarding who's currently participating in higher Ed and prison within, the state, perhaps aggregated by facility as well. So the decision was made to have James work with with Jacqueline at ICJIA to see if that information could be immediately produced and shared with the entire task force. Another thing we were talking about getting was, information on credit hours by semester, just to get a sense of how many people have access to higher ed in prison within the state of Illinois. I believe James, and I are going to follow up with ICJIA, to see if if that would be available and the other thing we decided was, I was going to be the spokesperson for this small informal group and report back to you all. We do plan to meet again in in a few weeks to have further discussions.
2. Rep. Carol Ammons asked looking at where we want it to go with this task force, I think something that maybe would help with the formation is if I understood how ICJIA sees us getting to the end for recommendations to the general assembly. She stated this meeting seems to me, I feel very one way street-sh because I can't hear from IDOC or any response from IDOC on the policies practices. I don't know for sure, outside of our first meeting what IDOC sees as a vision to, provide a unified educational process with higher education in prison. So, I feel not completely informed on what we want and what we intend to study to get to the general assembly for recommendations ultimately.
3. Chair Mayorga replied thank you for expressing your frustration, I believe the only way that can happen is if we set up a meeting outside of this space, because in the space during the exchanges that we have between member updates, and also in the time allotted for present subject matter experts, and because of the guidelines outlined by OMA only task force members can speak. So what I would recommend similar to the meeting that occurred offline maybe we can carve out time to meet with Director Jeffrys. Who I believe is a definite subject matter experts, which would be James to get some of those answers that are needed, but as long as the those offline meetings are 4 members or less of the task force, then it is not subject to open meetings act guidelines.
4. Rep. Ammons stated this is a waste of my time and all of these other people's time if IDOC will not fully participate in this process and whoever's here from IDOC should take that back to Director Jeffrys, and I'll certainly share with the governor because this makes no sense for us to have a task force of which the restriction is that he can't appoint a person in his stead and he himself isn't going to be here. So that's going to be very difficult for this task force to do meaningful work if the department is not fully participating in its success.
5. Chair Mayorga thanked Rep. Ammons for her comment and stated the desire is there on on James's part and it's really the guidelines that are set in place. He stated I appreciate your frustration and I'm pretty sure it's something that's common among task force members.
6. Sara Ross asked if IDOC could help facilitate a discussion with currently incarcerated students.
7. Chair Mayorga stated he would reach out to James or Camille to help facilitate the conversation.

**G. Public Comments**

1. Flora Esquivel Administrator Director at Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison (ILCHEP), Invited members to a quarterly meeting with IDOC, June 28, 2022 from 1-3 pm. She stated there is also a conference in October that everyone is invited to attend.
2. James Pagano Policy Advisor for IDOC, stated Director Jeffrys had a personal matter and was unable to attend today. He stated it is helpful to hear people’s frustration and I am hoping that the presentation given at the beginning of our meetings was helpful.
3. Chair Mayorga thanked everyone for their passion.

**H. Adjournment**

1. Moved by Dr. Eric Lichtenberger
2. Seconded by Nathan Wilson
3. All were in favor
4. No oppositions
5. No abstentions
6. Meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM