

Postsecondary Education Programs in Washington Prisons: An Analysis of Post-Release Education Outcomes

In 2021, the Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to examine how postsecondary education programs in prisons influence incarcerated individuals' educational outcomes and recidivism after release. This first report focuses on enrollment and completion outcomes in community and technical colleges (CTCs) in Washington.

Background

The Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) collaborate to provide postsecondary education (PSE) in state prisons, including workforce training and academic degree programs.

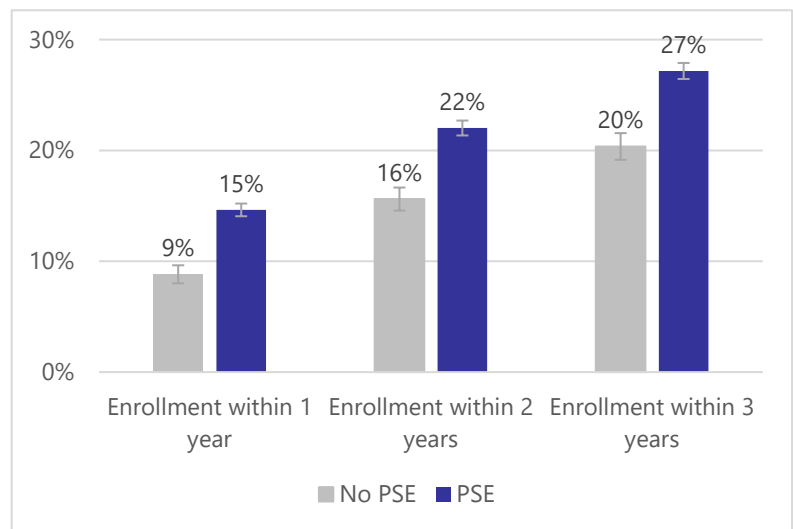
Findings

- Depending on the follow-up period, we estimate that PSE participants are between six and seven percentage points more likely than non-participants to enroll in a CTC after release.
- For example, PSE participants have a 15% probability of enrolling in a CTC within one year of release, compared to a 9% probability among non-participants. This is equivalent to a 66% higher probability of enrollment for PSE participants relative to non-participants.
- Among PSE participants and non-participants who enrolled in a CTC after release, we did not find differences in their retention rates, GPAs, accumulated credits, or probability of credential receipt.
- When considering overall credential receipt during and after incarceration, though, PSE participants were more likely to hold a credential than non-participants. Overall, 37% of PSE participants obtained a credential, compared to 1% of non-participants.

Limitations

- Our findings represent associations between PSE participation and education outcomes, not cause-and-effect relationships.

**Predicted Probability of Enrolling in a CTC
Within One, Two & Three Years of Release From Prison**



Note:
N=38,917.

Assignment Details

Assigned in 2021 Legislative Session
2SHB 1044, Sponsor: Rep. Leavitt

Report available on [WSIPP's website](#)

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