



ALABAMA
PRISON ARTS +
EDUCATION
PROJECT



**ALABAMA
DEPT. OF
CORRECTIONS**



EDUCATION: GAME CHANGER

More than 26,000 men and women currently reside in prisons throughout Alabama. Because 95 percent¹ of them will be released at some point during their lifetimes, incarceration is not always the end of their stories. For some prisoners, it is the beginning of a new journey. It also represents a pivotal time for communities throughout the state that will become their homes. The issue is not if those who have been in prison will return to Alabama communities, but rather when. Given this reality, the question becomes, "how can we equip these individuals to be successful in their post-incarceration lives?"

The answer? Education.

Auburn University's Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project (APAEP) is answering the call to create educational opportunities for those incarcerated in Alabama prisons. APAEP enables participants who meet Auburn's rigorous academic standards to earn college credits while in prison.

Education changes people. It breeds hope and improves lives. It teaches people to look beyond their current circumstances, to think critically, and to believe in a better future. Taking the gift of education into an area devoid of hope and opportunity is what drives APAEP staff and volunteers. They compel others to consider what a college education did for them and then ask, "Why wouldn't you want to invest in others to help them turn their lives around in that way?"



Since its inception in 2002, private support has helped the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project provide pre-college education courses in state prisons. The program now offers incarcerated students something no other prison outreach effort in the state, and very few throughout the country, provide — the opportunity for incarcerated students to earn a bachelor's degree, something that will equip them for their lives beyond prison bars.

Auburn is one of only a few public land-grant institutions chosen to participate in the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, a federal financial aid program that provides a third of the tuition for students in prison. This prestigious selection acknowledges that Auburn is a leader in prison education, with a national reputation for its significant history in this area — one that is longer than any other institution in the south. This honor creates an opportunity for Auburn to have a major impact on prison education in Alabama, which will have widespread influence in communities throughout the state. However, with costs exceeding \$1 million for 20 students to complete the program, APAEP must raise the additional funds required to supplement the grant. Help is needed to make this happen.

Current statistics indicate that 50 to 75 percent² of those released from prison end up back there within five years. The outlook can seem grim. But research continues to point toward post-secondary education as the most effective way to stem the tide of recidivism. Those who participate in prison education programs are 43 percent³ less likely to return to prison. This is significant and points to an important reality — prison education programs

EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS



make a substantial difference in the lives of those incarcerated students who participate. They also have a valuable impact on communities where these students live and work after their release.

Prison education represents a critical need for Alabama as the state faces prison overcrowding and funding issues and communities grapple with unemployment and poverty. Research indicates that those in prison enter the system with lower levels of education, completing on average just 10.4 years of schooling.⁴ Alabama's levels are even lower. In addition, the corrections system is comprised primarily of those from underserved communities, with significantly lower than average income and much higher poverty levels.

Giving to prison education is a wise community investment. Studies consistently show the direct link between education, particularly post-secondary education, and employment, along with the correlation between a decrease in repeat offenses and college education. Communities that invest in prison education programs see a 400 percent return on investment over three years — \$5 saved for every \$1 spent.³

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APAEP has provided

7,205
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APAEP offers courses in

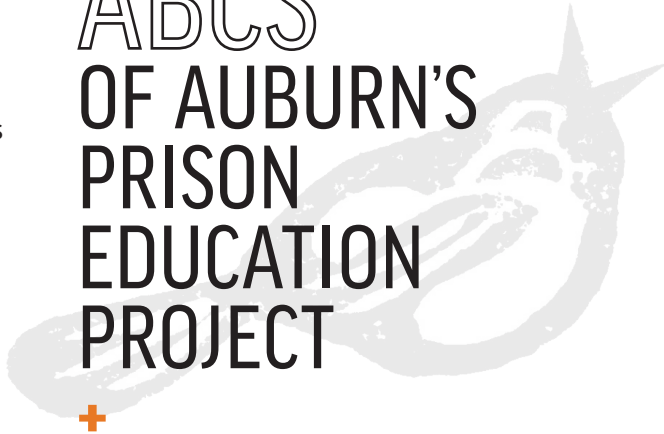
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CORRECTIONAL
FACILITIES IN
ALABAMA

From its humble beginnings as an arts program with “one poet teaching in one prison,” APAEP is now comprised of writers, artists, and scholars, teaching in 10 correctional facilities in Alabama. The latest APAEP achievement, beginning a credit-granting program in interdisciplinary studies, allows students who successfully complete a rigorous application process to tackle degree coursework in business, human development, and family studies, earning credits from Auburn University. The interdisciplinary degree focus was specifically created for APAEP students and the unique needs they’ll have after their release from prison and return to their communities.

Offering the first bachelor of science program in Alabama prisons, APAEP builds a path for Auburn students and faculty members, as well as others throughout the state, to teach students in prison. A byproduct of this outreach is the scholarship and research projects that emerge from the work, including scholarly articles and conference presentations addressing alternative teaching methods for non-traditional students and classroom settings. APAEP staff coordinate with Auburn’s Colleges of Science and Mathematics, Liberal Arts, Engineering, Business, Agriculture, Human Sciences, and Education for faculty members, academic resources, grant-writing and other program support.

A surprising result from this program is the strong partnership Auburn has built with faculty members and graduate students

ABCS OF AUBURN’S PRISON EDUCATION PROJECT



in the University of Alabama’s Master of Fine Arts Creative Writing program. It’s typical for Auburn and the University of Alabama to be opponents, but APAEP brings the two strongest institutions in the state together as University of Alabama faculty members and graduate students teach and work with the program.

Philanthropic support to APAEP is more than an investment in the future of an individual or even a group of students; it is meeting a critical need in communities across the state. Ensuring prisoners have access to education and the appropriate job skills means communities will thrive, receiving productive citizens equipped with knowledge and preparation for the future. These experiences translate into the acquisition of job skills, meaning participants are more prepared and can compete in the marketplace when they are released. Giving hope to one life is significant and will have far-reaching consequences, but giving hope to an entire community will make a difference on a large scale and will potentially change the world.

1. *Reentry Trends in the United States*, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004

2. *Recidivism*, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, 2014

3. *Building Effective Partnerships for High-Quality Postsecondary Education in Correctional Facilities Fact Sheet*, VERA Institute of Justice, January 2016

4. *Making the Grade — Developing Quality Postsecondary Education Programs in Prison*, VERA Institute of Justice, 2016



LIVING THE AUBURN CREED

For generations, the Auburn Creed has provided guidance for thousands of students and alumni. We want our APAEP students to feel a part of the Auburn Family, too. Our friends at the Auburn University Foundation sent us some bookmarks with the Auburn Creed on it. I talked to the students about the creed — what it meant for the Auburn family, how the wisdom in the words is a fantastic foundation for venturing forth, not only into their education as Auburn students, but also into the world.

The following week, two students came early. Mr. Jackson asked if I had a minute and then stood and started reciting the Auburn Creed from memory. He had been an Auburn student less than one week, but there he stood, in one of the most challenging places to take college classes, and he had made the effort to remember the words. He became a part of Auburn. He took the words to be true. It was one of the most memorable moments of my 16-year career with prison arts and higher education.”

— Kyes Stevens, founder and director of APAEP

“I once read a phrase on the front page of a book catalog that stated, **‘IF YOU THINK KNOWLEDGE IS EXPENSIVE, TRY IGNORANCE.’**

The reality of that phrase hit me like bricks dropping from a 10-story building. I am one that has made countless mistakes from being ignorant. For the past decade of my life, I have been incarcerated in the Alabama Department of Corrections, so I can attest that the cost of ignorance greatly outweighs the cost of knowledge.”

— APAEP student

“We’ve partnered with Auburn University and the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project for 15 years. During my tenure as commissioner I’ve seen first-hand what the statistics indicate — **PRISON EDUCATION WORKS**. Students in this program are achieving goals and in turn developing self-esteem, confidence, self-worth, character, respect for others, and a sense of purpose. This affects their time in prison but especially their lives when they leave. APAEP is a key component to our efforts to reduce recidivism and help students create productive, meaningful lives, engaged in the communities where they’ll work and live.”

— Jefferson S. Dunn, Alabama Department of Corrections commissioner

“Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project aligns with Auburn’s land-grant mission to provide instruction, research, and outreach programs for Alabamians. Because we are one of only a few institutions accepted into the Second Chance Pell Grant program, we feel a great sense of responsibility to continue our leadership in this area. The question is how can we reach even more students so that families, communities, and our entire state can benefit from the **LIFE-CHANGING EFFECTS OF THIS PROGRAM** and an Auburn education.”

– Timothy Boosinger, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, Auburn University

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MOTIVATIONS TO EARN A DEGREE RANGE FROM THIRSTING FOR KNOWLEDGE TO BEING ABLE TO

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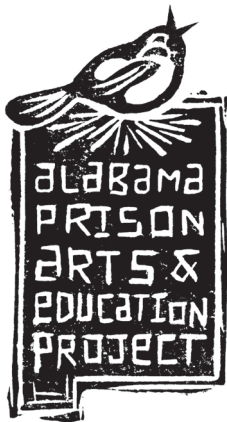
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UNLOCK EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Education opens doors like nothing else can or will. Students who walk out of prison doors find communities full of opportunity rather than a society devoid of options. Although their past has been determined, we can choose to offer the possibility of a different future to them — and to our communities. Private support is essential to affect change in Alabama’s prisons and ultimately, towns and cities throughout the state.

Your gifts to the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project will grant tuition support that, coupled with the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, will provide incarcerated students access to a practical, quality education, leading to bachelor’s degrees, future employment, and productive lives. Philanthropic gifts also will provide class supplies and textbooks for students, as well as travel funds and salaries for program faculty members. When given a choice of citizens and neighbors who have job skills, education, and hope for a productive future versus those who have only the experience and stigma of their past crimes, communities will always choose the former. We invite you to invest in Alabama’s future through a philanthropic gift to APAEP, because education changes lives.





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