

Countdown to Pell Reinstatement: Getting Ready for Pell Reinstatement in 2023 Transcript

- Hello, and welcome to today's webinar on Getting Ready for Pell Reinstatement in 2023, I'm Belinda Wheeler from the Vera Institute of Justice. Just as a reminder to everyone, this meeting is being recorded today, this webinar. Vera Institute of Justice is a training and technical assistance provider. We provide assistance to grantees on focused education, employment, and re-entry, we also connect grantees to peer networks, best practices and resources. This is an exciting time in correctional education. We have seen firsthand how post-secondary education improves the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. Our robust agenda today is designed to provide attendees with an overview of some of the great work already taking place throughout the country as we prepare for Pell expansion. We're excited to have four important speakers with us today from four key areas within this larger community who will share how they are preparing for Pell expansion. We have Mr. Sean Addie, director of correctional education from the US Department of Education, director Anne Precythe, Missouri Department of Corrections and president of Correctional Leaders Association, Dr. Lisa Vosper, associate commissioner of workforce education and training from the Louisiana Board of Regents, and Dr. Stanley Andrisse, executive director of P2P. Data has shown us that there is great demand for educational programming. 70% of people in prison would like to enroll in an educational program and a high number of those would be interested in post-secondary education. We're also seeing a significant investment from colleges. Launched in 2016, the US Department of Education Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative now includes 130 colleges in 42 states. New colleges will join the initiative later this year and Pell reinstatement takes effect on or before July 1st of 2023, enabling more colleges to administer Pell grants to teach in prison. Given the larger investment we are seeing from colleges and the overall excitement for educational programming, I'm delighted to invite our first speaker, Mr. Sean Addie from the US Department of Education to the conversation. Sean, a lot has happened since the FAFSA Simplification Act was signed into law in December, 2020. Can you please share updates from the Department of Education regarding Pell expansion and next steps?

- Of course. Thank you, Belinda. Good afternoon. My name is Sean Addie and I'm the director of correctional education in the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education at the US Department of Education. I'm happy to be here to share some background and some updates from the department. I'm gonna primarily focus on the FAFSA Simplification Act in the negotiated rulemaking process. On December 27th, 2020, the FAFSA Simplification Act was passed. This act made important changes to the Higher Education Act of 1965 in the free application for federal student aid or FAFSA, including making incarcerated students eligible for Title IV aid for the first time, since 1994, with respect to incarcerated students, the act permits students incarcerated in federal or state penal institutions and students who are subject to involuntary civil commitments to receive Pell grants. It creates a new definition of a prison education program and adds requirements for approval, reporting, oversight and evaluation of such programs. It eliminates the requirement for students to register with a selective service system as a condition of receiving federal student aid. It eliminates the suspension of Title IV eligibility for drug related convictions. The act amends the definition of cost of attendance for incarcerated students and permits the department to regulate that definition. And finally, the act allows financial aid administrators, more discretion to make adjustments for students with special or unusual circumstances, including incarceration. The department plans to fully implement these provisions by July 1st, 2023. Although the department has already announced that we are removing the requirement that male students register with the selective service before the age of 26 to be eligible for federal student aid, we are also removing the suspension of eligibility for Title IV aid for drug related convictions that occurred while receiving Title IV aid. In short, failure to register for selective service or having a drug conviction while receiving federal Title IV aid will no longer impact a student's Title IV aid eligibility, and that's effective right now, the 21/22 school year. Next I'm gonna provide some context on negotiated rulemaking. Negotiated rulemaking is a process under Title IV of the Higher Education Act where provisions must go through a negotiated rulemaking process in order to develop regulations. Under the negotiated rulemaking process, the department first holds public hearings and then a series of meetings with stakeholders representing interested parties. During these meetings, these representatives negotiate to attempt to find consensus around what should be in the proposed regulations. The Department of Education convened two groups of negotiators to complete this work, the negotiated rulemaking affordability and student loan committee, also known as the full committee and the prison education program subcommittee. The prison education program subcommittee was comprised of formally incarcerated educational advocates, state agency representatives, and other experts on prison education. Some of whom also sat on the full

committee. Some of those subcommittee members from the prison education subcommittee are in this webinar today. The subcommittee members served in an advisory capacity to the department and the full committee by developing the details of the prison education program draft language for a proposed regulation. At the end of negotiations, each full committee negotiator was asked whether they supported the draft text for each of the 12 topics that were going through negotiated rulemaking. If there were no objections to a particular regulation, the committee had reached consensus, which is the goal of the negotiated rulemaking process. The main committee reached consensus on prison education programs on December 10th, 2021. Because the full committee reached consensus, the next step in the process is a notice of proposed rulemaking or an NPRM. The department will publish this consensus language as a notice of proposed rulemaking. The public will then have the opportunity to provide written comments in response to the proposal. Prior to publication of this notice of proposed rulemaking, the department cannot respond to inquiries or comments on the consensus language. I'm gonna say that again. Prior to publication of this NPRM of notice to proposed rulemaking, the department cannot respond to inquiries or comments on the consensus language. That proposed language is forthcoming. It will be announced through the Department of Education channels and will also be released through the federal register. I imagine some of the stakeholders on this call from Prison Cells to PhDs and the Vera Institute and other stakeholders will also be highlighting when the draft rule is released if people wish to provide comments. Once the rule has gone through the comment periods, the department will publish a final rule. Included in this final rule will be responses to public comment. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide an update on the restoration of Pell for incarcerated individuals. I strongly encourage you to review the consensus language and provide input and feedback on the rule when it's released. Back to you, Belinda. Belinda, you are muted.

- Thank you so much, my friend. Thank you. Thank you so much for that update. This is a really exciting time in this country, as we are preparing for Pell expansion, and I really appreciated how Sean was able to kind of provide us with this overview of how things stand right now and how we will be moving forward in this process. Educators obviously have an important role to play in this, corrections also has an exciting role to play in this. People who participate in post-secondary education programs while incarcerated are 48% less likely to recidivate than those who do not. And prisons with college programs report less violence and safer conditions. Director Precythe, You were an important voice during the negotiated rule making process, both as the director of Missouri Corrections and president of CLA. Could you please share your enthusiasm for Pell restoration and how your state and CLA, the Correctional Leaders Association members throughout the country are preparing for it?

- Thank you, Belinda. I'm excited to be here to be able to represent corrections. I think it's very important that people understand correctional leaders, such as myself, are incredibly supportive and have been supportive of Pell grant expansion for years. We know that education plays a key role inside our institutions. As you said, it promotes safety and security, but as I've experienced firsthand, by talking with the incarcerated people in Missouri, nothing screams hope for a better future than education, that's in the outside community, as well as insider institutions. When I talk with the men and women in our prisons, the smile on their face, the hope that they have for having something better, something different than what they had before coming to prison just makes me realize this is really a very important aspect of what we do inside our institutions. So the ability to afford that opportunity to more individuals is something that I'm very excited about and other correctional leaders, we've all been following this carefully. 95, 97% of the people in our institutions are going to be coming back to our communities. And so it's up to us in this business to think about what kind of people do we want coming out of our institutions. And we have them longer than anyone else ever has the ability to work with these folks longer than law enforcement, longer than the courts, longer than social services. They're with us for a number of years. So we should afford them as many supports as possible to be able to prepare, to have a better future than what they had when they came to us. So some people may know this, some may not. We already have a tremendous number of education opportunities available inside our prisons. We do adult basic education classes. We do GED or HiSET classes. Some states it's mandatory. Some it's not, and now many states are allowing the ability for people to achieve post-secondary education. And that's something we wanna make sure that all states have the ability to do that. Whether it's an in class instructor led opportunity or through some sort of virtual online learning opportunity. So we're paying attention to those. And we think it's really important that correctional leaders take the lead and reach out to their higher education partners within their states. We wanna make sure that we are including the people directly impacted. So including formerly incarcerated individuals, as well as potentially incarcerated individuals in some of the decision making process. I know that sounds a little far fetched, but

who better to help us build the best product that will be successful, then the people who've already been there or the people that are living it right now. We really have to begin to reimagine what the optimum correctional environment needs to look like. And I think corrections from 40 years ago is just something that's gonna fall by the wayside over time. And we really need to be a more progressive institution overall and offering higher education is certainly a way that can help strengthen our incarcerated population, as well as the people who are working inside, what a great feeling to be a mentor to someone who's working on their higher education, to be able to help process and dialogue some of what they've learned in class that day. So it just really plays into where I think the future of corrections is headed. And then how can we be a part of that and really help support this overall process. You're on mute. There you go.

- Yep, I'm good. Thank you so much. I had a pregnant pause there. Thank you so much, Anne, for that. This is, again, this is so exciting. We're seeing now we've heard from the US Department of Education. We've heard from corrections, now as we're thinking of this larger community and we're working together, it's time to kind of think about state educational agencies and the full-on benefits to communities. Employment, earnings, and savings are all a very big part of this process. Educational institutions and state educational leaders have shown us that they do play this pivotal role in Pell expansion. Research shows us that 70% of all jobs in 2027 will require post-secondary education and training beyond high school. By increasing the educational opportunities to people who are incarcerated, we will see employment rates and wages increase. In addition to increased employment and earnings, taxpayers see considerable savings. States like Louisiana recognize this. Dr. Vosper, can you please share with today's audience the incredible work you and your team are doing in Louisiana when it comes to work placement education and the positive return of investment it has on your community?

- Thank you so much for the invitation, but let me first start by thanking Vera and for my colleagues that are also on the webinar today that are joining hands as we co-create nationally opportunities for all citizens to share in the American dream. And Director Precythe, I am stealing a quote you just made, I'm telling you now I'm gonna give you credit today, but after that I'm keeping it. And that is nothing screams hope for a better, and I'll add brighter, future than education. If that is not the truest statement I've ever heard, I don't know that there is one. Let me do a little background. The Board of Regents for the state of Louisiana is the public post-secondary coordinating board for all of our public higher education. That includes all four of our management board systems. It includes our statewide programs, which is LASFA, that's our financial aid program, our library resources, our LANI, which is our infrastructure for our internet, et cetera, and LUNCON, which is our research arm. But one of the things that we have discovered, and we are crystal clear on is that we cannot meet the state's north star educational attainment agenda's goal of 60% of working age adults between 24 and 65, having a degree credential or some other form of certification of value so that they can share in our prosperity pipeline if we do not engage all partners, we cannot do it in isolation. If every single high school student that enrolls, over 45,000 in Louisiana, graduate 100% and 100% of them go to college and complete in four years or two years at a community college, we still would not meet our 60% goal. So it is crystal clear that all talent in our state has to be developed. And when we say talent, we mean Department of Children and Family Services, those individuals that are on our TANF roles, those individuals that are experiencing the need for benefits, those individuals that are justice involved, our talent to be developed in order for us to reach our 60% goal. And so we are reaching out across programs, across agencies and working together to ensure that all Louisianans have an opportunity to prosper in this climate. And our governor, Governor John Bel Edwards, pre-COVID actually convened a workforce education sub cabinet that is comprised of all of the agency heads that have anything to do with workforce education and training to come together to look at solutions across silos and across agency borders. And what we have found in doing that work is that we are better together. We are one Louisiana, and we must work with each other to ensure that all of the talent in our state, and this begs an equity question too. All of the talent in our state, regardless of demographic, regardless of zip code has an opportunity to share in workforce education training and experience the American dream. We are super excited about the work that we are doing in our state department of corrections. We have convened a inter-agency interdisciplinary work group on Pell reinstatement. We are standing here waiting for it to kick in in 2023. And we're excited about that. Our group has been meeting, talking about ways for our higher education partners to engage more fully once Pell reinstatement is realized. And so we're excited about that. We are opening opportunities for our historically black colleges and universities in our state. Louisiana boasts the largest number of HBCUs per capita than any state. And we are the only place in the world that boast an HBU system. And so we are engaging our HBCU partners to engage in this work as well because we know what the demographics look

like for those that are a part of our prison pipeline. And so we are committed to this work. The Board of Regents has a master plan and I'll drop it in the chat for those who would like to look a little deeper, dig a little deeper. That master plan is built on three pillars, educate, innovate, and collaborate. And education is the key to the middle class. And innovation is looking at unique, innovative ways that we can join together, come together to move forward the agenda so that folks can participate in our education enterprise, and then collaborate. We cannot do anything without collaboration, Michael Fullan in his book "Change Forces: The Sequel", made this statement. He said, "In order for real systemic change to happen, you even have to engage those whom you wish to silence." And so we don't care who you are or what's going on. There is a seat at the table for you to participate if you are working with us to move our state's economic economy, to move our state's education enterprise forward. And so we're excited about something. And in Louisiana, we know a little something about gumbo. And so it takes all of the ingredients, the onions, the bell peppers, the pepper, all of the things that you wouldn't eat individually. But if you put them in the pot, if you stir them together, let them simmer for a little while, you're gonna get you some good eating. And so we're excited about that. We believe in collaboration and we look forward to answering any questions that you may have. And I wanna, again, thank my panelists for your work that you're doing in this space. Thanks, Belinda.

- Excellent. Thank you so much, Dr. Vosper, educate, innovate and collaborate. There's so many great takeaways just as Director Precythe and Mr. Addie had some great takeaways. This is just wonderful. And I'm so glad that we're having this opportunity to speak together today. I think you're right, the equitable engagement that we have in the community that we really are better together. And as someone who loves food, especially gumbo, I especially love that use of that reference there, my friend. So thank you so much for that. As we're thinking as Dr. Vosper had mentioned, racial equity and social capital is so important in general, but particularly in this space, people of color are disproportionately overrepresented in our nation's prisons, providing people who are incarcerated with post-secondary education is a primary avenue for upward mobility. As Dr. Vosper had mentioned that positively impacts their children, families, and communities, multiplying the impact of a single college degree. The voices of people with lived experience are critically important in this space, as all of our panelists have mentioned. In addition to people with lived experience running educational programs, there are community based partners that can help with reentry. I would like to welcome my colleague, Dr. Andrisse, to speak with us. Dr. Andrisse, can you please share how important it is for educational and correctional entities to work with community based partners for re-entry work? And can you explain how important it is to have representation from leaders in the field, particularly people with lived experience?

- Sure. And thank you, Belinda, for the invitation. It's a pleasure to be here with you all, I thank all the organizers for inviting me. Hard to go up after the great conversations, but hopefully I can add fruitfully to what has already been discussed. I wanted to start, I'll give an introduction to myself, but even before that, I wanted to start with a quote from me. And this was a piece that was recently published in "Nature", which as I'll explain to you is one of the premier articles in the field or premier journals in the field that I'm in. The quote in the article started off like this. "We demand a seat at the table, the leadership table, the funding table, the review section table, the high impact authorship table, all are places we deserve to be, yet you don't find many faces like mine in places like these. And you certainly don't find many experiences like mine." That was again a quote of mine from "Nature". So I'm a formerly incarcerated person with three felony convictions who was sentenced to 10 years in prison as a prior and persistent career criminal. I was told by prosecutor at that time that I had no hope for changing the decisions that I had been making. I'm now Dr. Stanley Andrisse, an endocrine scientist and assistant professor at Howard University College of Medicine. Some would consider that to be the Mecca of HBCUs. I know some colleagues might argue that, but I stand on it. I'm also a former faculty at Johns Hopkins Medicine, which for many years stood at the top as the nation's most productive research institution. In addition to Hopkins or formally being at Hopkins, I'm also a visiting professor at Georgetown Medicine and Imperial College London. And I mentioned those to say that the idea that was bestowed upon me by that prosecutor those many years ago, obviously wasn't quite correct, but the truth of many folks' situations that end up experiencing incarceration like I did, and that come from places like I've come from, originally from Ferguson, Missouri, the truth of the matter is many of them are told something similar to the effect that this is something that they will be doing for the rest of their life. This revolving door of incarceration is something that is inescapable. And in many cases that is a truth for some individuals that enter the system. We know that there is a high recidivism rate for folks that return to our community. But we also know that one of the most powerful ways to change that is all of the conversation that we've heard here today. We've heard from the Department of Ed, we've heard from

correctional leaders, we've heard from state department education agencies, and all of us are saying the same thing. And me, I'm coming to you as the executive director of Prison to Professionals, which I'll share a little bit about here in a moment. We're all saying the same thing. That education is one of the most, if not the most powerful tool to help keep people out of prison. But more importantly than that, the work that we do at Prison to Professionals, really, I'm gonna share with you some of the data from a study that a peer review study that's coming out from our organization and we of course report on recidivism. And that's something that we keep track of. But in actuality, it's not recidivism in our eyes that is of the most powerful ways of knowing if someone is doing well. And so for us, Prison to Professionals, we work with hundreds of individuals per year to help them pursue and obtain higher education. We have over 500, roughly 400 to 500 applications per year. And we work with about 100 to 120 individuals per year. And what we know from that is that the majority of the folks that are wanting to pursue higher education, or I should say what we know is that the majority of folks are interested in pursuing higher education, but there's a problem accessing it. And those folks that are looking to pursue higher education, we know that a good majority of them want to pursue a variety of different educational opportunities. More importantly, and kind of what I'll focus the last few minutes that I have with you here is this idea of within our study that we'll soon be publishing, we show that out of this particular study that included over 500 applicants, we found that the majority of them had no reentry support or no reentry mentors in their life. So our argument to this idea of now we're opening the gates, which we're very excited about. I sat on the Neg. Reg. committee that Mr. Addie was discussing. And I went through that process with several people here, actually, Belinda and Director Precythe were also part of that process. And so we're excited. That's why we're here. We're excited to be at this this point, but what our data shows from P2P is that if we're not thinking about how we're gonna be supporting individuals, as we just as the floodgates open up and more educational entities are looking to partner with correctional entities and trying to deliver higher education in prison. We know that our data tells us, and also my lived experience and the lived experiences of the people on our team and the scholars that we support, tell us that if you don't put together a system of support and mentoring, you won't get the results, you won't get as fruitful of results as you're hoping for. For people to be successful, particularly people who have experienced incarceration and are currently incarcerated, there needs to be a support system put in place. And the argument that was one of the main things that I was arguing for on the Neg. Reg. committee was this idea of higher education entities are good at, or were designed to deliver higher education. Correctional entities were designed for corrections, right? And now you're mixing the two. And then eventually that person is gonna be released and there just needs to be another party involved. And that other party that needs to be involved are community organizations that can help bridge the gap for those individuals. And by bridging the gap, higher education being good at education, corrections being good at corrections, and now we're trying to mix the two together, and then we're gonna release someone into the community. We need people that are experts at reentry. So we really, one of the things I did on the committee was to focus on that, how do we bring community organizations into the picture? And we were successful. And as Sean mentioned, we came to consensus, which being on the main committee, several, I think out of the 12, only three reached consensus. So it was not easy to reach consensus, yet we reached consensus on this particular topic. And we reached consensus on one of those questionable things which was bringing together this advisory committee to help inform the decision on corrections and to help guide things like providing support and mentorship for people in the program to help the programs be more successful to help the students be more successful. So for me, the work that we're gonna do to get ready for Pell is to really put together some opportunities to help educational entities and correctional entities understand good practices that they may be engaging in to help bring in community partners and just help them understand that it's not, it's an aspect of making your program stronger. And I will stop there and pass it back to you, Belinda.

- Awesome, thank you so much for that, Stanley. I really appreciate it. While I go into like next steps here momentarily, I just wanted to say to the audience, I want to encourage you to please ask any questions through the Q&A. We are going to have a robust amount of time here where we can kind of go through a number of different questions that the audience has. So please keep populating your questions in the chat and we'll get to those momentarily. Just a couple of kind of takeaways that I wanted to share as we're wrapping up this portion of the program is just to kind of remind everyone that Pell reinstatement is indeed coming July of 2023. Corrections and colleges really must be working together now to get ready for Pell. And some of those ways that they can be organizing themselves, getting ready for Pell is to come together with the gumbo with community organizations and people who are currently and/or formally incarcerated to create a plan for delivering high quality post-secondary education in prison. After the Q&A I'm gonna share a couple of resources, web links, and that for the community as well. But we also encourage corrections and

colleges to become familiar with the requirements of determining a college acting in the best interest of students and start identifying partners for that process because those partnerships, we are better together. And then working within your respective organizations to build that necessary infrastructure to support students. You can't do this overnight. It can't be a one person show. It really needs that robust support on all different levels as we're moving forward as a country to really expand this programming in really exciting ways. So what I'm gonna do now is default to some of the questions that we have here in the chat. I might start with one that Dr. Andrisse, you had just finished talking about with these organizations and kind of helping different partners in this space. We have a question from one of the people in the webinar today that was just kind of asking for where might an interested college, for example, what would be some resources that you might recommend for them depending on their state or like nationally, like obviously I know that they can go to your organization's website, FICGN, the Formerly Incarcerated College Graduate Network is a link I'm gonna provide momentarily, but could you provide just a little bit more information, for the wider community about how you might recommend a college that is interested in kind of having these conversations, some kind of organization, state agencies I'll start with you, Stan, and then if anyone else on the panel has any advice, please feel free to offer that up.

- So thank you, Belinda, for the question and thanks to our audience member for asking that question. I would first like to mention, Unlock Higher Education as an avenue of resource. So Unlock Higher Education is a coalition of organizations and individuals from across the country that work on increasing access to education for people currently and formally incarcerated. And one of their main mission or vision or belief is centering the voices of directly impacted individuals, but through Unlock Higher Education, we are hoping, I say we, P2P is one of the steering committee members of Unlock Higher Education. We're going to be hosting some webinars and we're working on putting together a toolkit and to answer just that question about how educational entities, as well as correctional entities can look to build partnerships and the Unlock Higher Ed has membership or people involved in that from across the country. So it's likely that we have connections within your state, that we can direct you to partners that could help out in reentry. So that would be my suggestion is to reach out to Unlock Higher Education for additional resources. The other place that I would also suggest is the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison. So the Alliance has put together a publication that they're gonna be doing yearly that tries to get a landscape of higher ed in prison. And one of the things that they actually found, and this is also the same thing that we found in our research study that I was mentioning we're soon to be publishing, is that they have a good hold on all the programs that are being offered, not just Second Chance Pell programs, but programs that have been supported by philanthropy or the university for many years. And one of the questions that they ask, are what type of supportive services do you have, almost, a very low percentage have mentoring and re-entry services and peer services where it is one of the unique things that maybe I failed to mention about P2P is that out of the individuals that are connected out of our team members, almost 85% are formerly incarcerated. So from the Alliance's work, they found that there's really no formerly incarcerated people that are part of these teams. And definitely there's a lack of formerly incarcerated people in leadership positions, but those would be two resources, Unlock Higher Ed and the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison.

- So Belinda, this is Anne. One thing that I would like to add to piggyback on what Dr. Andrisse is saying to my corrections colleagues out there, don't be afraid to reach out to these organizations, what you will find when you start really interacting with formally incarcerated individuals, is that we're on the same side. We're both trying to do the same thing, but what I've come to realize in my 35 years in the business is with everything that I know, the one thing I don't know is a lived experience. So why is it that when you're in the medical field, you're pulling on people who have other experiences that you don't have to gain and further yourself, we do that in all areas of life. Why aren't we doing that more in today's world, as we're trying to make our institutions better and safer and get the population what they need rather than what we think they need, how can we deliver it in a method that is better received by them? So when we think about including currently incarcerated and inviting formerly incarcerated to the table, I just think there's great value in that. And it's just what I've learned in the last few years. And when you spend time speaking with the people that are inside our institutions or have been in there, you find it goes back to that hope. Everybody wants hope for something better. And if education can be a part of that then great, but what else can we learn and glean from them that we could adapt and make it reasonable for both sides. We can't be afraid of that any longer. So I really appreciate what Stan is saying. And I encourage correctional leaders, officers, probation, parole officers, whoever you are, find those organizations, those good reentry programs in your communities, and go talk to them and find out where can you join forces and really become trailblazers in

this new world. I think you'll see incredible results that you never expected to be there.

- Anne, thank you so much for your comments. If I can just jump in real quickly, we've done a few things in Louisiana. And I must say that we have the Commissioner of Higher Education, my boss, made a statement to me when she first came on and she said, we will not stand around being admirers of problems. And so if there are challenges, we have to be willing to take them on. And that starts at the legislative house or the pointy building across the street from us. We had to have advocates to remove the box, to ban the box so that individuals can even get in the door to do some of the things that Dr. Stan is talking about. Secondly, it is not just the department of corrections' responsibility. It is not, because the challenge that we are facing is that there are still so many people in the public who are trying to get past some stigmas of old and not recognizing that the economy of their state, whatever state it is, is going to rest on individuals going to work, getting a job, paying taxes, and becoming positive citizens in our community. And if we try to relegate them to what's the word, secondary peripheral roles, instead of fully engaging them into the experiences that we have in our states, we are doing a disservice to ourselves, to those individuals and to the future prosperity of our states. Let me just tell you two quick things that Louisiana has done. We have created an opportunity through our collaboration work, where everyone owns everybody's issues. We have a no wrong door approach. So if someone goes to the health clinic and when they get to the health clinic to bring their kid to get shots, then the health clinic person that's waiting on them is gonna ask them, do they have a college degree, then they're gonna ask them what was the highest level of college? Well, do you wanna go back to school? Well, I wanted to go, but I have a history in corrections, da, da, da. Okay, well, here's da, da, da. And when they start answering those questions, we have a Unite Louisiana platform that is a warm handoff. They don't have to say, well, go down the street. Those people can help you. They put it in the system and say, you have an appointment with a community college down the street. You have an appointment with DCFS because you qualify for food stamps. You have an appointment with this person over here, because you can get a voucher for your kid to do thus, thus, and so these are things that they never would've known. And one of the things that has happened in this collaborative work is that when former justice involved individual citizens in our state get out, they now don't have, some still do, as we're getting the word out, people are feeling more empowered to ask questions, more empowered to say, look, I need help. I need housing. The place I thought I was gonna be able to go. I can't go anymore, I broke up with my girlfriend. You would be amazed at the little things that send people 20 steps back. And so we have to have a ready, rapid response to be able to meet needs. And without judgment, without stigma, you've done your time. Come on, get in. We got the boot needs some help. And so when we talk about Louisiana moving forward, it's an all hands on deck approach. So that's the first thing, the second thing, and I'm sorry, I'm talking long, but I get really excited and passionate about this subject. The second thing is we have worked with the Atlanta Fed the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. If you are not aware, please reach out to me. I'll share every resource that we have with you. But the Atlanta Fed created CLIFF, C-L-I-F-F. It is an acronym that I'm going to mess up. It is a career ladder, something, something, something, but what it does is they created an infrastructure dashboard so that an individual would know whether or not a decision would throw them, their benefits over a cliff. And so we are utilizing that with our Department of Children and Family Services, but our goal is to start using it when individuals are about to exit the prison system, meaning that if a person is exiting the prison system, they need a portfolio of everything that they need to take with them. Their driver's license, their medical records, their dental records. They need to know that they've applied for food stamps. They have a housing voucher, whatever those things are, they need all of that. But when they go into education and training, we have had to educate legislators who want to call certain citizens lazy because they won't take a 50 cent or a dollar raise on a particular job. Well, if they take that dollar raise, they will lose their \$400 childcare voucher. Who's going to give up a \$400 childcare voucher, times three kids for a dollar raise? And until we understand what these be benefits CLIFF looks like and what it costs individuals, then we run into some challenges. So those are two resources. If there are other states that are on the call, Unite Us is the platform that we use for our Unite Louisiana work. Look into them. I'm happy to refer you to the resource that we worked with. They were excellent. And the Atlanta Fed work on the CLIFF's benefit. We are in the process of troubleshooting that for implementation now. And so we are happy to help other state brothers and sisters to get things moving forward. Thank you for letting me talk so long.

- No, this is absolutely wonderful. Thank you, all of you for your excellent responses to that. This is just so, and it's great having this platform so that we can all come together and show how a lot of these things are working very seamlessly already together. Dr. Vosper, if I could just follow up with you, you've done a great job of kind of highlighting all the great things that you're doing in Louisiana. I know that you have been in

the trenches in Louisiana and like have been kind of building this infrastructure from the outset, we had a question in the chat that was from another person that I'm assuming is in another state than Louisiana and their question was, or statement and then a follow up question was, I'm in a state that is a service industry and workforce vocational training focused state. And some of those careers don't require higher education, or there's that you'd mentioned like the banning of the box kind of issue where they don't allow formally incarcerated individuals to work with them. How might you recommend for some of the people on the call here today on the webinar who are like this is great, what Louisiana's doing, and then certainly please put those web links in for, these resources that are phenomenal that you're sharing. But if a state is kind of a little bit slow to kind of start having this conversation, could you provide a little bit of additional context of how the kind of boots on the ground original kind of process started into this wonderful system that you've got going on now?

- Certainly, and Louisiana is a service industry too. So we needed to make sure that we worked with our partners and economic development. What I would say is in your states, you cannot only look at where you are now. You have to pull a Wayne Gretzky and skate to where the puck is going. Where do you want to see your state move to? So that was one of the things that we were looking at in the state of Louisiana. We had high service industry. There's somewhere to eat on every corner in Louisiana, every corner in Louisiana, there is our highest job demand was in the service area culinary because we are big touristy state because of New Orleans, primarily, but other places in the state as well. And so we did have a high volume in those areas, but what we needed to do is evaluate jobs that were in demand so individuals would get a living wage. And so we created a Star Job system and I can drop that in the chat as well, where there is a protocol for our occupational forecasting conference, where they evaluate our jobs and through a protocol, determine a star rating. And what gets double, what gets counted double in that formula is wages because we did not want folks to go through getting jobs that was continued to keep them as the working poor. And they still were not able to advance or to make movements that would allow them to be able to take care of their families. So I'm happy to share a couple of resources from our Louisiana Workforce Commission, our Star Job rating system and our, My Life My Way, which is another career tool that individuals use that would help them to start career pathways into areas that gave them the greatest advantage for economic self-sufficiency. I hope that address the question and feel free to reach out if I need to provide more.

- That's wonderful Dr. Vosper, thank you so much for that. Just as a reminder, please, everyone continue to put the questions in the Q&A chat we're continuing to move forward with those. We do have a couple of questions that are related either directly or indirectly to FAFSA forms. There's one question that will there be a specialized FAFSA form for students that are incarcerated or will they be filling out the traditional FAFSA? And also if an incarcerated student has defaulted student loans, what can we do to help them become eligible? Again, I wanted to highlight both of those and kind of lift them up to Mr. Addie, who's on our team here today. If you would like to share a little bit of information, I know that there's a couple of things going on right now, specifically related to the FAFSA. So I'll turn it over to you, my friend. And I'm certainly happy to jump in with some other stuff afterwards, if needed.

- Sure. And I would actually really quickly, I would also add to that last question. I feel like maybe I'm stealing a little bit of Stan's thunder here, but I think also you need to think long term and be proactive when it comes to just because, a, pushing on institutions and organizations to allow former incarcerated individuals to participate. I don't think you should say we don't do this, so we're never going to do this. And I think you can be someone who can lead the charge or bring others together to lead the charge. So that formerly incarcerated individuals can access things like that. But now I'll put my Department of Education hat back on and hold on, it was on the whole time. So loan consolidation, loan default, the department is very aware how big of an issue this is, especially with Pell grants coming back for people accessing federal financial aid, how important it is to be able to get out of default. I can't say more than that, but what I just wanna say, the department is very aware that this is an issue. And we're thinking proactively about that. And then in regards to the question about the FAFSA there actually was, and I'll drop some links into the chat here. There was a Federal Register notice that went out a few months back where the department is actually proposing a specific FAFSA for incarcerated individuals. And the comment period for that is open until April 25th. So there will be an opportunity for folks to see what that FAFSA might look like and also provide comments and input in terms of what they would like to see, changes that they would like made, suggestions that they have based on their experience or things that they've encountered. So the department is aware, and a redesign of the FAFSA is actually part of the name FAFSA Simplification Act. We're reducing a

number of questions. I think it's from 108 to 36 is the idea just to make it easier for people to use. So I will drop those links into the chat, linking to the Federal Register notice as well as linking to a draft of what the proposed FAFSA looks like for people who are incarcerated.

- Thank you so much for that, Sean. Yes, and I do encourage everyone to please go and check those links out. I know at Vera, we have been reviewing the document and speaking with community partners and other organizations in the field and just like other entities, we are planning on submitting a public comment, a letter into the Federal Register. So definitely encourage everyone on the call to kind of take a look at that. So moving on with these great questions again, thank you everyone.

- Can I just add in real quick.

- Oh please, sorry, Stan.

- Yes, to add to what Sean's mentioning. I think that's one of the importances of partnerships and so that you're not doing all the work by yourself. P2P helps our individuals in our program get out of loan default, student loan default. So there are currently ways to do that. It takes some navigating and familiarity, but you know, not terribly difficult once you have that familiarity and support and ability and capacity, I should say, within your program again, why you should be partnering to help increase your capacity to do those types of supportive services. And then also increasing your capacity to do the supportive services of even completing the FAFSA and now we're hoping for it to be simplified. And I think as you mentioned, we too will be looking to kind of provide some comments into that public comment period on the new version that would be available to incarcerated students. I also wanted to just, Belinda, I know you may have a question in mind, but I thought it was, there's several questions that are geared around something that we discussed in Neg. Reg. and there was a, I believe it was Adrian Griffin, and I don't know if you saw this or you had it in mind for queue it up, but where do colleges start? It looks like they didn't, Adrian didn't mention what state they're in, but they're having some difficulties even navigating starting up a college in prison program. And that was something that was talked about in Neg. Reg.. I don't know if that's something that we wanted to elevate into the conversation, but just a suggestion.

- Yes, I'm just trying to find that question myself, my friend, with that. I know that, sorry, I'm just trying to find that here. I think as someone who started a program from scratch when I was wearing my former hat at Clafin University, and I think, having those conversations on your campus and looking at your mission and vision, I think is really important. I think one of the slides that we had here was trying to make sure that that infrastructure is in place. So kind of like talking with on your campus and seeing what kind of infrastructure and things that you could put in place with that. But then as you're having those conversations, talking with your community partners, talking with your department of corrections within that state to kind of see as we are indeed preparing for July of 2023. So for those in the audience that would exclude people who are colleges that are already in this space through the first round or the second round of Second Chance Pell and later this year when the department announces the third round of Second Chance Pell schools. So any school that's currently not a part of the Second Chance Pell Program, definitely being proactive. Stan, let me just double check with you, my friend, was that kind of where I still have not been able to find that question, I apologize. Was there something else that you wanted to offer with that?

- I mean, so Unlock Higher Ed and P2P is again, helping with colleges think about how to approach that, it was from Adrian Griffin at 3:30 p.m. in the Q&A, but yeah, so I would add, I think it was mentioned that their corrections told them that there was an RFP process. So it looks like they were being thrown some loopholes, or not loopholes, but from their wording that there were some barriers that they were encountering with communicating with the correctional facility. But I would certainly suggest to reach out to some entities that have experience in working through those types of challenges.

- And, Belinda?

- Oh please, Anne?

- If I could add onto that, because I think it's a great point. And I think that also dovetails into a couple of the other comments that we've seen on there about corrections prioritizing post-secondary education, along

with the other things that they do. I think it's important for this group to know that the people running the department of corrections, there were more than half of us back in 2019, I think is when I met Dr. Andrisse, we met on Capitol Hill when it was a group of formerly incarcerated individuals teamed up with correctional secretaries, directors, and commissioners from across the country. And we canvassed The Hill and met with many congressional leaders to talk about the importance of reinstating Pell. So when people on this call say that, how do we prioritize? I think you need to start speaking up because the people leading your department of corrections, they understand the importance of education. If there's a disconnect between where you are and your senior leadership, you need to find out where that is. It might be the local warden. It might be the local functional unit manager. It might be somewhere, the clog in the filter, find out where that is and let's get past it. It may feel like work on the front end, but in the long run, it is gonna be so much better for the entire state, for the safety of the institution, for the betterment and the life enrichment of the people we serve, for the staff that work in the location, for the community they're gonna go to, for the family of the incarcerated, when they can see that their loved one is achieving higher education and doing something productive and fulfilling with their lifestyle incarcerated, that sends a completely different message to the home and to the children of the home. So there's no reason higher education shouldn't be prioritized right along with everything else because, oh, by the way, higher education isn't taught by staff at the facility. It's taught through collaboration with higher education leaders. So the work is on the front end, but it will pay off in the long run. So don't let, Thomas Edison said, people often miss the opportunity for work because it's dressed in overalls and looks like work. So don't miss that opportunity because it looks like work.

- Thank you so much for that, Anne. I really appreciate that. And I think one thing to kind of lift up in addition to what Director Precythe has mentioned here, is these number of resources that are available like Dr. Vosper, other colleagues have been putting a lot of these links in here. At the Vera Institute of Justice, we have a number of toolkits for colleges that are like interested in kind of starting a program. And we've got a guide there to kind of help institutions kind of think about how they might work with that process. And with regards to RFPs, I know myself created, with the team members at Vera, a potential RFP for colleges and corrections to consider, which includes a lot of the language that we have seen. Again, we still have to wait and see what happens in the public comment period and how things work in November, but just kind of thinking through questions of like these guardrails and protections for students in this space to kind of make sure that has a college thought about this, has a college thought about this, and it's a way for both the partners, college and corrections, to kind of come together before they create a Memorandum of Understanding to, again, just like what Director Precythe has mentioned, doing the work on the front end to make sure that there's greater success as these programs are moving forward. Let me pause for a second and see if anyone else wanted to offer anything. I know I've been jumping into these questions perhaps a little bit too soon without checking to see if anyone else on the team wanted to mention anything. But thank you very much for that. Okey dokey. I think we've got time for one more question here. Just wanted to check in with regards to technology. We've seen a lot of great advances in a lot of ways with technology in the educational space. We've had a lot of challenges with COVID and we've seen corrections and educators really pivot in very interesting ways, like very positive ways for students with technology. And we're just kind of curious, one of the questions that came in the chat was, is there any kind of thoughts either on the state system or perhaps corrections, Director Precythe, about what you've seen with technology making education more accessible as we've been moving forward?

- I'll say that it is definitely one of the things that correctional leaders know is needed. So whether we can do it in a virtual atmosphere, whether you can do it on a tablet, we have to get there. And again, it goes into the bucket of fiscal needs and how do we fund it? How do we make that possible? But it's gotta go on the list. And if it can at least make it to the list, then it starts to become a priority and we can't keep moving it down the bucket. So as we think about virtual visitation and things like that, we have to also be thinking, well, we could do some education that way. So how can you get a better bang for the buck? And it's about how you sell the story at the legislature. That's why you can't talk about this in a vacuum. It's really gotta be part of a larger picture about institutions in general and what we're trying to do to get people ready for the workforce today. And so, I mean, I don't have a good clean answer, but again, you gotta start talking about it because if we don't, nobody's gonna do anything.

- Can I add something to that really quickly? Thank you, Director Precythe, one of the things that I hadn't heard mentioned, and it may be in the chat is that we've got to engage business and industry in a post-

COVID reality. Everyone is looking for workers. Everyone needs talent. Everyone needs to build up their labor force. Help wanted signs are everywhere. There are help wanted signs at places that never thought that they would have to advertise for workers. We had a business owner at one of our workforce board meetings that said that he had 10 interviews set up and nobody showed up and he was incensed that that was the case. Well, here's the deal, you may need to rethink what you're looking for in terms of talent. We have individuals that come out of our corrections facilities that have some of the most skilled individuals that come out that are master welders, that are carpenters, and we have got to change the dynamic and engage business and industry leaders from a different perspective that we're trying to develop talent, and we're trying to build the labor and workforce pool for our future success. And so I would say we need to definitely add business and industry leaders to the table to be a part of those conversations.

- Excellent. Thank you all so much. We've got about a minute left. I wanna thank all the speakers again for all the wealth of information that you've shared with everyone today. I think that this has been really valuable. There's been a lot of information shared in the chat. This recording will be available to people. I've listed here, also some additional resources that are available to the public, feel free to reach out to myself or the Vera Institute of Justice. We can connect you in all sorts of meaningful ways. And I know some of my colleagues on the panel here have shared their information as well. So thank you all very much for this. This has been wonderful. We have a suite of other programs that are happening this month for Second Chance Month. We encourage that you continue to participate in these webinars and let's keep this conversation going. This is a very exciting time in education. So thank you again, everyone for your time, and enjoy the rest of your day.

- Thank you. Great to serve with you guys.

- Thank you.

- Thank you, everybody.

- Great job, Belinda.