

PRISON UNIVERSITY PROJECT PROGRAM EVALUATION
Progress Report
8.5.2012

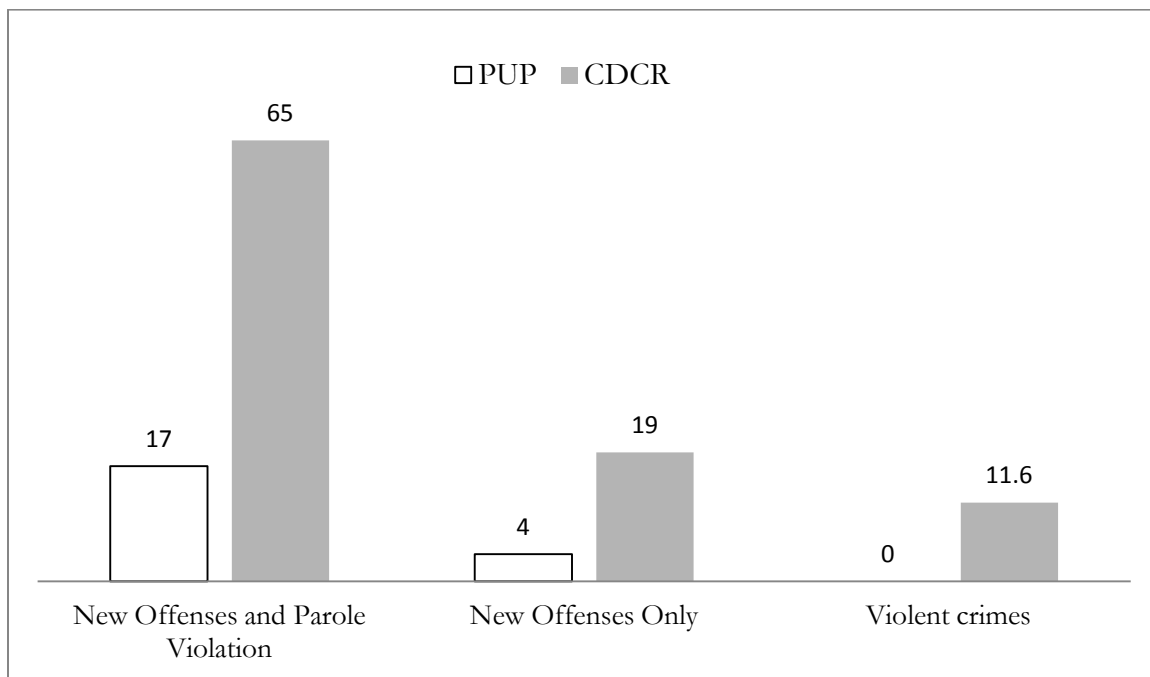
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HIGHLIGHTS

- In the past ten years, PUP has served roughly 1,000 unique students at San Quentin State Prison.
- There are roughly 330 students currently active in the program, about two-thirds of whom are enrolled in college-level courses.
- The recidivism rate for both new offenses and parole violations among PUP graduates who leave prison is 17 percent, compared to 65 percent of CDCR releases as a whole.
- The recidivism rate for new offenses only among PUP graduates who leave prison is just 4 percent, compared to 19 percent for CDCR as a whole.
- In the 11 years since the program has been collecting data, no PUP graduate has been returned to prison for committing a violent crime.

Figure A. Return Rate for PUP Graduates Released from Prison and Total CDCR



CDCR data are from 2011 CDCR Adult Institutions Outcome Evaluation Report.ⁱ Percentage returned for violent crimes is calculated as percent of individuals returned for new offenses. Violent crimes include assault and battery, sex offenses/rape and sexual assault, and homicide.

I. BACKGROUND

Corrections in America

- According to recent estimates, nearly 3% of the adult population of the United States is currently under some form of correctional jurisdiction. On any given day, 1 in 100 Americans is in prison.ⁱⁱ
- On any given day, one in three young African American men is on probation or parole, or is serving time in jail or in prison. African American men are now nearly twice as likely to spend time in prison as to earn a Bachelor's degree.ⁱⁱⁱ
- The total cost of corrections in the U.S. is well over \$39 billion a year.^{iv}

Corrections in California

- California houses around 15% (or 1 in 6) of the nation's inmates, a total of about 130,000 people at any given time.^v
- California has built about a prison a year, every year, for the past two decades. In the same period, the state added two new universities.
- From 1980 to 2011, the share of the state's general fund dedicated to corrections increased from about 3 percent to roughly 11 percent. During the same period, funding for UC and CSU was reduced from 10 percent to less than 7 percent.^{vi}

Declining Funding for Prison Programming

- In 1993 and 1994, Congress passed the Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and the Higher Education Reauthorization Act, which decimated prison college programs across the country.
- In 1994-95, about 83 percent of correctional systems offered post-secondary education programs. By 1997-8, this had been reduced to roughly 55 percent.^{vii} The vast majority of these programs that remain are vocational, however. Only a handful of academic degree-granting programs remain nationwide.

II. THE COLLEGE PROGRAM AT SAN QUENTIN

Overview

- In 1996, a group of individuals from UC Davis, then-Patten College, and the San Quentin education department, created a plan for a small college program that relied entirely on a volunteer coordinator, volunteer instructors, donated textbooks, and no cash whatsoever. They started with two classes.
- Today the College Program at San Quentin is the only on-site, degree-granting college program in the entire California State prison system, and one of the few remaining prison higher education programs in the nation. It remains an extension site of Patten University.
- The program offers approximately twenty college-level classes each semester in the humanities, social sciences, math and science, leading to a fully accredited Associate of Arts degree. The program also offers college preparatory classes in math and English.

Student Body

- Any inmate at San Quentin who is housed in the general population who has a high school diploma or equivalent is eligible for participation in the College Program. About ninety percent of PUP matriculates spend their first year in the College Preparatory Program.
- In the past ten years, PUP has served roughly 1,000 unique students at San Quentin.
- There are roughly 330 students currently active in the program. About 200 are enrolled in at least one credit-bearing class.

III. STATUS OF PUP EVALUATION

Research Design

- The study consists of four phases:
 - During Phase I, researchers worked with program staff to develop a research design and timeline for completion of the project. Human subjects approval was secured from both the PI's sponsoring institution and CDCR.
 - During Phase II, data on the program model and its participants was gathered, and a database was built for evaluation of how participation in the program affects a variety of outcomes. Data sources include PUP internal databases, Patten University registrar data, and CDCR recidivism data.
 - During Phase III, data is being analyzed in order to evaluate the program's effects, and findings will be synthesized in a series of progress reports and a final report.
 - During Phase IV, qualitative data will be collected from current program participants, as well as recent graduates, to assess perceived program effects.

Identifying a Control Group

The primary challenge in evaluating the effects of the PUP program is identifying an appropriate comparison group. Participation in the College Program is voluntary. Thus, those who self-select into the program are likely to have pre-existing differences from those who do not.

The evaluation will provide recidivism information on a series of control groups, for the purposes of comparison.

1. Total Statewide sample

Includes all adults released from CDCR.

2. Comparable Statewide sample

a. Level II

Includes all adults released from CDCR prisons of a comparable security level to San Quentin.

b. HS or equivalent

Includes all adults released from CDCR who have an educational background that is equivalent to entering PUP students.

3. Completers of Substance Abuse Treatment Programs

Includes all adults released from CDCR who have participated in a substance abuse treatment program while in prison.

4. Total SQ Sample

Includes all adults released from San Quentin State Prison.

5. Comparable SQ Sample

Includes all program eligible adults released from San Quentin who have an educational background that is equivalent to entering PUP students.

6. Transfer request

Includes all adults released from CDCR who requested transfer to San Quentin in order to participate in the PUP program, but were unsuccessful.

Current Status

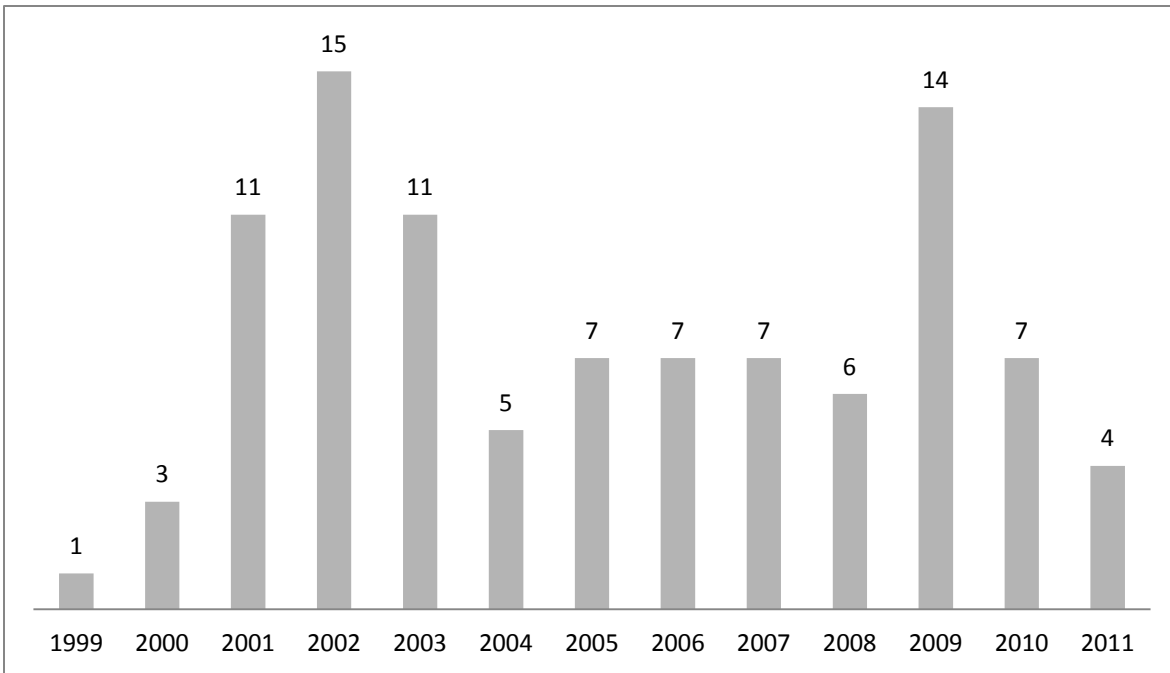
- We have made substantial progress toward the first stage of the program evaluation. Phases I and II are complete, and Phase III is well underway.
 - Over the past several months, we have applied for and been granted IRB approval for human subjects research, as well as applied for and received formal permission from the state of California's human subjects board for the acquisition of sensitive data from CDCR.
 - We have completed organizing PUP's paper and digital files, and prepared a full set of student records that will serve as the primary data for the evaluation.
 - Transcript data from Patten have been acquired and merged with student records, allowing us to begin an analysis of graduation rates, course completion rates and student retention.
 - We have been working closely with CDCR to put together information on the in-prison behavior and post-prison recidivism rates of all current and former PUP students (roughly 1000 unique individuals), as well as the same data for control groups.
 - Recidivism data on PUP graduates has been supplied by CDCR, and analysis is underway.

IV. PRELIMINARY RESULTS

PUP Graduates

- Between 1999 and 2011, the College Program graduated 98 students (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of PUP Graduates, by Year



Preliminary Evidence on Outcomes among Graduates

- Between 2001 and 2011, 47 graduates (about half) paroled from prison.
- Rates of return and recidivism are substantially lower for PUP graduates than for the general population of California parolees (see Tables 2 and 3).
 - Of PUP graduates who have been released from prison, the three year return rate, including parole violation and new offenses, was about 17 percent.
 - Of all PUP graduates who have been released from prison, only two were convicted of new offenses within three years, one for robbery and one for burglary.

Table 2. Outcomes among PUP Graduates

Parole Year	# Released	No Return		Parole Violation		New Offense	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
2001	2	2	100	0	0	0	0
2002	1	0	0	1	100	0	0
2003	3	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3
2004	2	2	100	0	0	0	0
2005	5	4	80	0	0	1	20
2006	3	3	100	0	0	0	0
2007	4	4	100	0	0	0	0
2008	2	1	50	1	50	0	0
2009	9	7	77.8	2	22.2	0	0
2010	6	6	100	0	0	0	0
2011	10	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total	47	39	83	6	13	2	4

Data are from CDCR records on PUP graduates.

Table includes only graduates who have paroled from prison during the indicated period.

Indicates three year return/recidivism rate.

Table 3. Return Rates among Individuals Released from CDCR

Parole Year	# Released	No Return		Parole Violation		New Offense	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
2006-2007	115,254	40,235	35	51,806	45	23,051(est)	19

Data are from 2011 CDCR Adult Institutions Outcome Evaluation Report, Figure 23: Three-year outcomes for inmates released from all CDCR adult institutions in FY 2006-2007.

- Return rates for PUP graduates are substantially lower than for individuals released from prison who completed a Substance Abuse Treatment Program while in prison (see Table 4).

Table 4. Return Rates by Substance Abuse Treatment Program Involvement

	No Aftercare			Completed Aftercare		
	# Released	# Returned	% Returned	# Released	# Returned	% Returned
In-Prison SAP Participant Completer	7,522	5,000	66.5	665	195	29.3
In-Prison SAP Participant Non-Completer	4,547	3,006	66.1	310	92	29.7

Data are from 2011 CDCR Adult Institutions Outcome Evaluation Report, Figure 24: Recidivism Rates by Substance Abuse Treatment Program Involvement.

[http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Adult_Research_Branch/Research_Documents/ARB_FY_0607_Recidivism_Report_\(11-23-11\).pdf](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Adult_Research_Branch/Research_Documents/ARB_FY_0607_Recidivism_Report_(11-23-11).pdf)

Preliminary Qualitative Evidence

- Students in the College Program believe that the program has positive benefits for the prison writ large.

- One student in the program says:

The impact of the College Program on the environment of the prison overall can be measured by the overall violence (or lack of) within the institution...A large part has to do with people that are involved in the College Program using what they have learned to facilitate self-help groups...Almost every self-help group in San Quentin has someone that has gone through, or is going through the College Program, as a facilitator for its program...The College Program is producing leaders in the San Quentin community and these leaders are volunteering their time to help change the behavior of those that are in prison by providing the means to discuss and realize the cause of such behaviors.

- Students report that the College Program positively affects their relationships with friends and families outside prison.

- A recent graduate from the College Program comments:

The program has also had an enormous impact on how my family and friends view me as a person...My communications skills with my children has helped them to open up to me. As I share my ideas with them, their (sic) share their ideas with me. During my visits, my family and I talk about some of the things

that I have learned. We no longer talk about old problems and terrible things that go on in prison. Their interest in me has grown and I receive more letters from my nephews, nieces, Godchildren, and other family members...My son and daughters tell me that they are proud of me.

Conclusion

In sum, we are making great progress and have already uncovered some important (and striking) results. As it continues to progress, the project will go far to identify and quantify PUP outcomes. Most importantly, it will provide a real benchmark for how a successful prison-based higher education can reduce recidivism, and promote positive attitudes and behavior among the incarcerated both prior to and following parole.

ⁱ California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Recidivism Report.
[http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Adult_Research_Branch/Research_Documents/ARB_FY_0607_Recidivism_Report_\(11-23-11\).pdf](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Adult_Research_Branch/Research_Documents/ARB_FY_0607_Recidivism_Report_(11-23-11).pdf)

ⁱⁱ Pew Center on the States. 2008. One in 100: Behind Bars in America. The Pew Charitable Trusts.

ⁱⁱⁱ Western, Bruce and Becky Pettit. 2004. Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in U.S. Incarceration. *American Sociological Review* 69:151-169.

^{iv} Henrichson, Christian and Ruth Delaney. 2012. The Price of Prisons: What Incarceration Costs Taxpayers. Vera Institute for Justice.

^v CDCR Population Reports,
http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Reports_Research/Offender_Information_Services_Branch/Population_Reports.html

^{vi} Wingert, Pat. 2010. Classrooms or Prison Cells? Newsweek.

^{vii} Cited in Page, Joshua. Eliminating the Enemy: The Import of Denying Prisoners Access to Higher Education in Clinton's America. *Punishment and Society* 6(4):357-378.