



Podcast: Second Chance Pell Grants

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Podcast Transcript: Text Version

(Classroom chatter)

Teacher: *What's Thomas Jefferson's quote about a democratic society?*

Narrator: Doctor Petrosky's political science class is like most other college classes.

Teacher: *Somebody's gotta know this. I know it.*

Narrator: Except, it's located inside a prison.

(More classroom chatter)

Teacher: *The cornerstone of a democratic society is an educated populace.*

Narrator: Education in prisons is not a new concept. But all the students in this class at Mission Creek Corrections Center in Belfair Washington are enrolled with federal Pell grant funding.

Since 1994, inmates have been banned from using Pell grants for education. But a pilot program launched in 2015 lets selected prisons across the country like Mission Creek to partner with local colleges and allow inmates to take classes using the Pell grant. The goal of the pilot is to find out what type of education is most beneficial to inmates and whether or not Pell grants encourage more inmates to go to college.

A recent study found that inmates who received correctional education during prison were 43 percent less likely to return. Correctional education experts like

Doctor Sultana Shabazz hopes the percentage will increase with the addition of Pell.

Doctor Sultana Shabazz: *What we're finding with Pell is that it's opening up this whole new avenue. This whole idea of being able to go to college, is a different avenue for a lot of women who never thought this was even a possibility.*

Narrator: The first cohort of students receiving Pell grants at Mission Creek enrolled in classes earlier this year. Shabazz says she's already seen an uptick in inmates taking college courses. For many, they've realized their hopes and dreams for after prison.

Inmate 1: *My dream is to open up a homeless shelter.*

Inmate 2: *My goal is to complete my AA.*

Inmate 3: *I want to open up my own business.*

Narrator: *So, has Pell impacted your ability to take classes?*

Inmate 1: *If it wasn't for Pell, there would be nothing for me here. We have the opportunity to see ourselves as intelligent women and not just felons.*

Narrator: Rachel Friederich, DOC Communications.