

RCW 28B.50.815 Associate degree education for incarcerated adults. The college board may authorize any board of trustees within the system to promote and conduct associate degree education and training of incarcerated adults through new or expanded partnerships between the community and technical colleges and the department of corrections. [2017 c 120 s 2.]

Findings—Intent—2021 c 200; 2019 c 397; 2017 c 120: "(1) The legislature finds that incarceration is both a rural and urban issue in the state. According to one recent report, the highest rates of prison admissions are in rural counties. In addition, since 1980, the number of women in prison has increased more than eight hundred percent. Additionally, people of color are overrepresented in the prison system. The legislature finds that studies clearly and consistently demonstrate that postsecondary education in prisons improves safety in facilities, and incarcerated adults who obtain postsecondary education and training are more likely to be employed following release, which leads to a significant reduction in recidivism rates, improvements in public safety, and a major return on investment. The legislature finds that reducing recidivism decreases the financial burden to taxpayers and the emotional burden of victims.

(2) The legislature finds that research indicates that postsecondary education and training is an effective evidence-based practice for reducing recidivism. An analysis commissioned by the United States department of justice determined that adults who received an education while incarcerated were forty-three percent less likely to recidivate.

(3) Ninety-five percent of incarcerated adults ultimately return to their communities to obtain employment and contribute to society. The legislature finds that according to the bureau of labor statistics, unemployment rates for people with only a high school education are twice that of those with an associate degree. Research has shown that adults who participated in education programs while incarcerated were thirteen percent more likely to be employed.

(4) The legislature further finds that correctional education is cost-effective. A 2014 study by the Washington state institute for public policy estimated that, based on a review of national research literature and cost-benefit analysis, there is a return on investment of twenty dollars for every dollar invested in correctional education.

(5) It is the intent of the legislature to enhance public safety, including the safety of prison workers as findings show that violence rates are reduced in institutions where there are educational programs, to reduce crime, and to increase employment rates in a cost-effective manner by exploring benefits and costs associated with providing postsecondary education degree opportunities and training to incarcerated adults through expanded partnerships between postsecondary institutions, nonprofit entities and community-based postsecondary education programs, and the department of corrections.

(6) It is the intent of the legislature to support exploring the use of secure internet connections expressly for the purposes of furthering postsecondary education degree opportunities and training of incarcerated adults, including providing assistance to incarcerated adults with completing financial aid materials. The legislature intends for the department to be able to provide complete assurance that all internet connections used by incarcerated individuals are secure.

(7) It is the intent of the legislature to support expanded access and opportunities to postsecondary degree and certificate education programs for persons of color by setting goals and partnering with nonprofit entities and community-based postsecondary education programs with historical evidence of providing education programs for people of color.

(8) It is also the intent of the legislature, by requiring the study under RCW 72.09.469, to examine the effects of providing postsecondary education while incarcerated on enrollment in the postsecondary education system postrelease." [2021 c 200 s 1; 2019 c 397 s 1; 2017 c 120 s 1.]