



## Conference 2021

### Concurrent Paper Presentations – Day 1 - Session 2 Track A Programming & Informal Education

2:30 – 3:30

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87447930712?pwd=VzlvNWVlOHBLUWQ1WXliY3BNejZTUto9>

#### **Ameliorating Academic Outcomes of Formerly Incarcerated Students Through Faculty Development and Ally Training**

Taryn Williams

Senate Bills 1391 in 2014 and Proposition 57 in 2016 have contributed to a boom in the number of formerly incarcerated (FI) individuals enrolling into 2- and 4-year academic institutions in California (Currently and Formerly Incarcerated Students, n.d.). With this increase in FI students entering the academic landscape, their particular needs must be addressed to ensure their success. However, little scholarship on factors affecting FI students' success exists. Based on a systemic review of the literature, this thesis identifies problems that FI students face, such as social stigma, negative familial support systems, and lack of academic preparation. Additionally, this thesis highlights resources that contribute to FI students' successful reintegration, including support groups, student service programs, and student/faculty connections. Using the state of California as a case study to identify what is currently available for FI students, this research proposes faculty development programs (FDPs) as the missing link in ensuring the quality and completion of their degree programs. Because university faculty members are asked to teach students from marginalized groups for which they have no training, FDPs are essential to give them the tools they need to help support specific student subpopulations. No known FDP or ally training programs exist specifically for FI students. This project will analyze and synthesize the necessary components of the structure, delivery, and rhetoric of successful ally training that address other similar student groups – i.e., groups that may be hesitant to self-disclose their status. The goal of this thesis is to inform a comprehensive solution for educators to create inclusive learning environments for FI students—taking into account all of the challenges that affect self-identification—as a model for any college campus.



## **Navigating Systemic Barriers through Intrapreneurship**

Ray Tebout

Criminal justice system involvement presents significant barriers to educational, career, and professional development. This is not only the result of having a criminal record but also, of not having pursued the traditional and/or linear career trajectory, typically available to non-justice-involved parties. Experience and research demonstrates that people with justice system involvement benefit from the ability to define and create their own career and educational pathways tailored to make the most of their unique experiences. My presentation would introduce a conceptual framework based on applying the concepts of entrepreneurship to creating a job, degree, or self-guided training program that allows people to use their justice, or other adverse experiences to define their own career path. While building and starting a business is not for everyone, everyone can benefit from taking an entrepreneurial approach to career development. This is a set of concepts I created, refined, and applied to myself and my coaching clients to obtain degrees, credentialing, jobs, and professional opportunities that are not typically pursued or accessible to people with criminal records. This framework, when applied, allows one to turn their barriers into strengths to achieve academic and career success, as well as create a unique niche market with limited competition. Participants will be invited to use a one-page worksheet at the end of the presentation to prompt a discussion of how anyone can use this framework to create the career they want despite systemic barriers, misinformation, and personal doubts.

## **Education Not Incarceration**

Dr. Suzanne Phillips

Hello, my name is Dr. Suzanne Phillips and I am married to my husband who had spent 20 years in the California prison system. I have dedicated my career to supporting individuals who have been impacted by the criminal justice system and I would like to share my experiences, education, and research with the group. My family was profoundly and negatively impacted by inadequacies of reentry support systems. Therefore, I understand the importance of education and supportive services for reentry, especially for individuals who have served 10 years or more. At the age of 19, my husband did not yet possess the experiences and education needed to become a productive member of a community. For individuals like him, rehabilitation and reentry support are critical in making reintegration into society possible. My husband's experiences of the inadequacy of the existing support led to my three year research of reentry programs, higher education in the California prisons. I had created a reentry program that I teach to all my students who are currently incarcerated in the hopes that it gave them more tools to be successful upon returning home.



## Conference 2021

### Concurrent Paper Presentations – Day 1 - Session 2 Track B – Research/STEM and Advocacy

**2:30 – 3:30**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84395974813?pwd=eERvYWRLenNhYU1pakdWbzFrUVJCUTo9>

#### **Finding Your Inner IT Genius**

Joshua Lange

I learned how to work with computers to diagnose and repair state vehicles while in maximum security prison, then furthered these skills with my first job during work release. Knowing my way around a computer and the internet was the key to ensure my employment and advancement to regional manager at a Fortune 500 company within two years of release. Since then I've built online and hybrid learning systems worldwide for top 100 universities and three online learning companies operating in 24 countries, and have earned three Masters and a Doctorate degree. With this set of skills, nobody cares about my criminal record. Although I teach Practice-Based Research at the PhD level, this presentation is practical. It will introduce "MyInnerGenius," a free one hour aptitude test used by IBM and Microsoft that will identify whether inmates can thrive in an IT job, and how using the test can help prison education programs to offer specific learning pathways for STEM education relevant to success in transitioning to IT roles upon release.

#### **We Must Not Serve Power; We Must Speak Our Truth to It**

Jay Borchert

As a pioneering and trailblazing formerly incarcerated PhD recipient, I have, over the last 5 years, watched my career descend into shambles, as neither I, nor those around me - my advisors, mentors, and colleagues - had any idea what to do to stop the hemorrhaging. Being a former prisoner PhD was new to everyone, yet the problems I encountered were not new to the academy. Beginning with the personal transformation that ended my criminal career and fueled my long but steady ascent to the PhD and its many successes, my story will serve to show how a radical scholar with a PhD from the top program in his field can be systematically rendered powerless to do meaningful work, lift his voice, or maintain his dignity and independence despite his work gaining



readers everyday. Through a non-accusatory narrative of events, the author will show how treacherous the road “at the top” can be. And, in-so-doing will serve to demonstrate, as a call to arms, how absolutely critical a cadre of intensely supportive comrades are to anything approaching career success for any radical formerly incarcerated scholar. We must stand on our own. We must create our own power.

## **Reentry and the American Dream: People returning to the community share the same dream but lack the same access**

Dr. Esther Matthews

Researchers and professionals in the criminal legal system typically define successful reentry using one measure: recidivism. However, current recidivism rates suggest something might be missing from this limited definition of successful reentry. Additionally, research reveals that reintegration is a reflexive process between the individual and the community. The public must support reentry in myriad ways, if successful reentry is to be achieved. To fully understand the various perspectives regarding reentry, and the potential pitfalls, this study used semi-structured interviews and a survey experiment derived from the interviews. Seven formerly incarcerated mentors and 67 people currently incarcerated in two Northeastern prisons were interviewed. Qualitative analysis of the data reveals that people reintegrating into the community have the same goals as everyone else: they aspire to own a house, achieve financial success, have a family, and feel like productive members of society. However, the survey results suggest that people in the community view certain aspects of success, especially the financial elements, as less important for people who have been incarcerated. According to policy and public opinion, people returning to the community – most of whom are from poor, minority communities – appear to be relegated to a second-class American Dream. Given the findings, a variety of policy implications and recommendations will be discussed. Ultimately, race and class equity cannot be achieved if the jobs deemed most appropriate for those returning are in the construction or manufacturing fields and Ivy League institutions are reserved for children whose parents have never been incarcerated.