



Ad Hoc Report for Prison Education (PEP) Additional Location

Central Oregon Community College
2600 N.W. College Way
Bend, Oregon 97703

August 27, 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Implementation Status.....	1
Educational Offerings.....	1
Coursework	1
Program assessment.....	2
Resources and Capacity.....	2
Roles and responsibilities.....	2
Student services.....	2
Facilities and equipment	5
Faculty and staff.....	6
Enrollment and Budget	6
Enrollment	6
Budget Revenues and Expenditures	6
Additional Factors and Challenges	8
Concluding Statement	8
Implementation Status	9
Next Steps.....	9

Introduction

The Central Oregon Community College (COCC) Prison Education Program (PEP) offers rigorous, quality, credit-bearing higher education at Deer Ridge Correctional Institution (DRCI), a minimum-security Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) state prison located at 3920 East Ashwood Road, Madras, Oregon 97741.

The COCC PEP provides the opportunity for incarcerated students to complete coursework leading towards an Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree. The PEP supports justice-impacted students post-release and facilitates articulation to other Oregon colleges and universities.

COCC has had an education presence at DRCI for many years, with a successful Adult Basic Skills/GED program and a 1-year Welding Certificate program. The following timeline delineates the development of COCC PEP:

August 2, 2023	Received approval from the Oregon DOC to offer a prison education program
December 1, 2023	Received substantive change approval by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
Spring 2024	Received an In Prison Bridge to Pell grant from the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) for an inaugural cohort of 18 students
June 2024	Approved for Pell eligibility from the US Department of Education
September 2024	Implemented PEP at DRCI

There have been no major changes at COCC or at DRCI since the approval of the program that have impacted the implementation of PEP courses.

Implementation Status

Educational Offerings

Coursework

The program offers coursework for the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree—a credential that streamlines credit transfer between Oregon’s 17 community colleges and 7 universities.

Because adults in custody (AICs) release at different times of year and sentences at DRCI average 18 months (fewer than the 2 years required for an Associate's degree), COCC PEP's initial emphasis has been on offering courses that are part of the Oregon Transfer Module (OTM) as a way to further maximize credit transferability. The OTM is a subset of transferable courses that satisfy college and university General Education requirements.

There have been no major changes to course offerings since program approval. Students with no previous college credit and who enrolled in the inaugural term (Spring 2024) are on track to complete their AAOT degree in Spring Term 2026.

Program assessment

For any course being assessed as part of COCC's five-year assessment cycle, student learning outcomes assessments will be collected via paper by individual instructors and sent to COCC's Office of Assessment and Curriculum for inclusion in broader institutional tracking as part of the College's five-year assessment cycle. As required, annual reports to the Oregon DOC will include this information; the first such report will be submitted in Summer 2026.

Students complete course evaluations by paper each term using the same form that other students complete online. An administrative assistant consolidates and transcribes all the evaluations to anonymize students' identities. Evaluations are submitted to and reviewed by the Instructional Dean and evaluations may be included in faculty personnel files for purpose of tenure and promotion. (Most faculty members have the ability to select the term for which their evaluations will be submitted to their file.)

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is working to improve data disaggregation among DRCI programs, specifically the ability to track PEP and non-PEP cohorts. This will improve reliability of data on course attrition, course success, and course-taking behavior, as well as demographics (age, race/ethnicity, veteran status, first-time college student status).

Resources and Capacity

Roles and responsibilities

No changes have been made to the program's original Memorandum of Understanding. The only changes to roles and responsibilities in staffing has been the addition of a half-time PEP Coordinator position. This individual will work closely with the DRCI Education Director and PEP Faculty Lead to coordinate program administration, student and faculty support, and post-release planning. COCC PEP is also supported by an on-site COCC Administrative Assistant and Computer Lab Specialist.

Student services

Onboarding and Orientation. The College's First Year Experience (FYE) team provides an in-person Bobcat Orientation program and packet specifically targeted to DRCI students. It details processes, services, and expectations.

Academic Advising. PEP students are advised by the PEP Faculty Lead, similar to all COCC students who are advised by an assigned Faculty Advisor. The newly hired PEP Coordinator will also counsel with and advise students. Each term students meet with the Faculty Lead in their advisory role. Prior to this meeting, students are provided with the intended course schedule for each term, including course name, dates/times, outcomes, instructor, course description, and course attribute (e.g., social science general education requirement). At the time of the meeting, the advisor and student review a printed copy of the student's GradTracks (COCC's degree audit tool) report, which is provided to each student for progress retention. This paper copy provides students regular feedback on their degree trajectory. During the meeting, the student and faculty member discuss the courses offered in the upcoming term and whether it is in the best interest of the student to enroll in all or some of the courses. For students who started the PEP with no college credit, the course offerings have been designed to move the students towards completion of their AAOT in Spring 2026. For students who started the PEP with college credit from other institutions, PEP staff work with students to have prior credits transferred. In this case, for some students taking only a selection of courses is most useful to move the student toward degree completion. Students are encouraged to make the decision that is most beneficial for their academic, pro-social, and pre-release preparation needs.

Regular coursework offerings (e.g., College Success, Career Planning) build student autonomy and skills. Post release, students can continue working with the same College advisor they had while incarcerated if appropriate (e.g., the student will continue to pursue coursework at COCC). Since faculty members also serve as advisors, post-release students may request to be advised by a faculty member with whom they worked at DRCI.

Student Access. Faculty and staff collaborate with students to identify the most easily accessible instructional tools (e.g., lab materials) and documents (e.g., handouts). Faculty and staff have identified ways to ensure that instructional materials can be taken back to students' living spaces and stored there.

Standard COCC processes for completing registration and financial aid documents, emailing, appointment scheduling, and communication by phone have all been adapted for DRCI students. DRCI employs staff specializing in ADA accommodations.

Library and Research Services. Students receive free access to *JSTOR*, an online database available to all higher education in-prison programs. The computer lab specialist, instructors, and COCC faculty librarians coordinate additional research needs beyond what is accessible via *JSTOR*, such as non-academic current events sources and medical or

scientific literature identified through *PubMed*. COCC reference librarians visit DRCI in person for writing and research assistance as well as to provide instruction in information literacy. The PEP team is working to expand computer access to include Canvas and other research databases. Hard copy materials are brought into DRCI or printed in the Education unit when online resources are unavailable.

Tutoring. COCC's GED and welding programs at DRCI employ a peer-to-peer model for tutoring. The program plans to recruit students who successfully complete PEP coursework to work as tutors in their preferred subject areas and PEP staff will work with DOC to create an AAOT Tutor job category for students who have completed an AAOT (either at DRCI or elsewhere) and wish to continue to engage with education for the duration of their sentence.

Writing instructors have partnered with the COCC Writing Center to give students the experience of working with a writing center tutor to complement feedback provided by the instructor. Opportunities will be available in person or via MS Teams to work with the Writing Center Coordinator.

Financial Aid. The *studentaid.gov* website is approved for AIC use by the Oregon DOC. With two-week advance notice, Oregon DOC will create an email address for students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online. The COCC Financial Aid Office provides in-person financial advising regularly for all COCC PEP students without requiring additional staffing. A Financial Aid Advisor from COCC's Financial Aid Department visits DRCI at least once a year for current students and whenever new students are enrolled. The Financial Aid Advisor assists with any student questions. Staff visits include describing financial aid processes, Pell grant limitations, and eligibility maintenance requirements. Staff provide assistance with verification issues, dependent student overrides, and other potential barriers.

Job Placement and Reentry. COCC partners with WorkSource Oregon, a community-based organization, on job placement services. WorkSource provides career exploration, résumé and interview workshops, National Career Readiness Certificate assessment, financial literacy, and occupational skills training planning. Students also receive assistance with Oregon State ID, Oregon Health Plan enrollment, SNAP/TANF, transportation, housing, and drug treatment services to facilitate transition post release. COCC PEP also coordinates with Changing Patterns, a local community-based organization whose mission is to support people releasing to central Oregon. Six COCC PEP students have released since the launch of the program to counties throughout the state. Post-release support has been provided to all students. All released students are either currently enrolled in full-time post-secondary education, are employed full-time, or are balancing a combination of employment and continuing post-secondary education.

Communication and Support Infrastructure. Staff and faculty provide on-site communication during regularly scheduled hours. Standard DRCI communication is through notes (a.k.a. kytes), and Education and PEP staff are available to scan handwritten student notes to email to instructors. Faculty and staff may be scheduled for individual support.

Post-Release Support Services. Students who release to Central Oregon and continue their education at COCC have access to the College and Career Success Coach, Faculty Mentors, and COCC's Career, Academic advising, and Placement Services (CAP). Specialized support is available through Veteran's Services, Student Accessibility Services, and the Office of Equity and Well-Being. Students continuing through COCC do not need to reapply to the college.

Students transferring to colleges and universities receive support in applying, transferring credits, and aligning past coursework with future degree goals. Further, they are provided with hard copies of unofficial and official transcripts. Releasing students are referred to other support services, including community-based organizations, where they release.

Student Behavioral Support. When behavioral concerns arise in the classroom, education and PEP staff work with students to find solutions. There have been no serious behavioral issues in the classroom since the start of the PEP. Small DRCI rules violations (e.g., dress code) can be addressed by DRCI Education staff, DRCI Corrections staff, or Faculty. In the event of a behavioral issue managed within DRCI, faculty will collaborate with students pulled from class to identify pathways to course completion where possible. Given that DRCI is a minimum-security facility, if any behavioral issue arises that results in significant disciplinary action by DOC, the student will be relocated to another, higher security institution. In that case, the PEP staff will coordinate removing the student from the classes, including working with Financial Aid. Since the start of the PEP, two students have had behavioral issues outside of the classroom that resulted in the students being transferred out of DRCI to a higher-security DOC institution.

In general, course scheduling is designed to be flexible, with 1–2 flex days built into course schedules. When lockdowns occur, procedural mechanisms are in place for continued support (e.g., paper homework, housing unit visits, remote instruction options).

Facilities and equipment

DRCI has allocated a classroom dedicated to college instruction. The classroom houses a COCC un-networked laptop and faculty are able bring in a USB drive with course materials to deliver via the laptop. The classroom is equipped for screen projection, has a document camera and DVD player, and includes other resources to support content delivery without access to the internet.

Faculty and staff

All COCC faculty who teach at DRCI teach at other COCC campuses. More than 90% of faculty who teach with the DRCI PEP are full-time tenure-track or tenured faculty. The hiring process for the new PEP Coordinator position included a nationwide search.

Enrollment and Budget*Enrollment*

An initial cohort of 18 students was enrolled through a competitive application process. The admissions panel, composed of the DRCI Education Coordinator, the COCC ad hoc DRCI Faculty Lead, and a tenured COCC Faculty member with several years of teaching experience at DRCI, screened more than 40 applications for the open spots. Due to computer access limitations, the cohort size was reduced to 16. As students have released, open spots have been back-filled. In the most recent round of applications, nearly 50 applications were received for 6 open seats.

Budget Revenues and Expenditures

Budgets and Actuals. Tuition revenue for the 2024–25 cohort was estimated to be at \$126,321 (see Table 1). Due to a smaller cohort and a slight variation in credits offered, tuition revenues were \$109,758. Expenditures totaled \$11,176.19, which leaves the program’s current claim on cash (i.e., available balance) as \$98,581.81.

Unexpected Savings. Some of the highest priorities of PEP’s budget philosophy are to minimize course fees, ensure that students would receive and keep instructional materials (e.g., textbooks), and create a classroom environment that resembles the experience of taking classes on campus.

While the program budgeted upwards of \$100,000 in expected expenses for Materials (i.e., classroom set up) and Outside Contract Services (i.e., equipment), supplies and textbooks costs were far lower than expected. Moreover, DRCI set up projection audiovisual equipment at no cost, and the welding program donated security cages for it.

HECC’s In Prison Bridge to Pell grant provided an additional boon in that it furnished some set-up costs in Spring 2024.

Non-General Fund. PEP funds are kept separate from the College’s General Fund. In the College’s parlance, all revenues are kept in a Non-General Auxiliary fund, which is designed to serve as a passthrough where funds are received and spent as quickly as possible. This type of fund not only facilitates program budget tracking, but unlike a General Fund account, its balance may be carried forward from year to year.

Table 1. PEP Budgeted and Actual Revenues and Expenditures (AY 2024–25)

Account	Title	Budgeted Values	Actual Values	Variance
42100	Tuition-Credit	126,321.00	\$ 109,758.00	\$ (16,563.00)
51100	Administrative Salaries F/T	627.00	\$ -	\$ 627.00
51400	Faculty Salaries P/T	0.00	\$ 1,837.50	\$ (1,837.50)
51410	Adjunct Faculty	0.00	\$ 525.00	\$ (525.00)
51500	Classified Salaries F/T	3,295.00	\$ -	\$ 3,295.00
52100	Payroll Assessments	3,695.00	\$ 649.75	\$ 3,683.00
61000	Materials and Supplies	35,640.00	\$ -	\$ 35,640.00
61160	Student Supplies	0.00	\$ 641.24	\$ (641.24)
61220	Class Supplies	0.00	\$ 168.90	\$ (168.90)
61230	Class Materials	0.00	\$ 77.64	\$ (77.64)
62000	Outside and Contract Services	80,664.00	\$ -	\$ 80,664.00
62380	Contract Services-Mailing Services	0.00	\$ 10.10	\$ (10.10)
62700	Outside Services Payments	0.00	\$ 5.00	\$ (5.00)
62850	Student Expenses	0.00	\$ 1,425.80	\$ (1,425.80)
64100	Administrative Travel	2,400.00	\$ 4,011.26	\$ (1,611.26)
69100	Scholarships	0.00	\$ 1,824.00	\$ (1,824.00)
		\$ (126,321.00)	\$ (11,176.19)	\$ 98,581.81

Salaries and Travel. Training, salaries, and travel expenses for instructors are paid from the General Fund by individual academic departments. Required travel (Administrative Travel) for the PEP Faculty Lead is paid out of PEP funds.

The Oregon DOC requires that a percentage salary funding for DRCI Education come from PEP funds. No percentage of contribution was specified, so a nominal one was billed in AY 2024–25 (about 1%). With a clearer picture now of how much DRCI Education administration and staff interface with PEP, it was decided that PEP will contribute a higher percentage to their salaries and benefits in AY 2025–26 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Projected PEP Contributions to DRCI Education Staff and Administration

Name	DRCI Education Role	Adult Basic Skills GED (HECC)	DRCI Welding (DOC)	PEP
Jay Sklenar	Director of Corrections Education	80%	10%	10%
Alyssa Rush	DRCI Administrative Assistant	80%	10%	10%
Lori Young	DRCI Computer Lab Specialist	75%	—	25%

Future Budget Planning. A carryforward of nearly \$100,000 was not entirely accidental. The program planned to request a PEP Coordinator position and wanted to demonstrate the program's ability to fund some or all of the position. Ultimately, the program was approved for a half-time position funded by the College's Foundation. If, however, the program can expand to include a second cohort, it can fund most or all of a full-time PEP Coordinator position. DRCI has already pledged to provide an additional classroom if needed for a second cohort.

Additional Factors and Challenges

Overall, the implementation of this program has been relatively smooth, successful, and well-received by students, faculty, and staff at both COCC and DRCI. The expansion of educational opportunities is strongly supported by the DOC and DRCI's superintendent.

The most persistent challenge for COCC PEP students is access to technology, particularly in that COCC has not been permitted to purchase or provide prison-designed laptops (SecureBooks). Even when another correctional institution offered its surplus of SecureBooks to the program, DOC denied the transfer request.

Some Oregon correctional institutions provide limited Wi-Fi access. COCC PEP has advocated for expansion of this technology to DRCI. Wi-Fi access would support the use of Canvas, the College's learning management system (LMS). Open access software provided by the University of Washington creates a closed Wi-Fi system where faculty and staff can upload Canvas content via a USB device. Additional library databases can also be accessed in this way. A request was made to the Oregon DOC to approve installation of the software and the use of a closed Wi-Fi system, but the request was denied with little explanation.

This year's Oregon House Bill 2747 was designed to expand AIC's access to computers, increase access to Wi-Fi, and add IT staffing at Oregon correctional facilities. The measure, however, met the same fate as many bills this year and never left the House Ways and Means Committee. As a result, program staff continue to seek opportunities to increase computer access and improve the equity of the learning environment at DRCI.

On another note, the program recognizes that content delivery design for low technology environments needs to be promoted and built into program sustainability, and though no formal request has yet been made, faculty members have indicated a desire for this support and will pursue this option in the next faculty bargaining process.

Concluding Statement

Since its launch in Spring 2024, the COCC Prison Education Program at DRCI has worked toward achieving its foundational objective of providing thought-provoking, engaging,

transferable college coursework to incarcerated students through the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree pathway.

Implementation Status

The program has demonstrated strong operational success with its initial cohort and has developed an effective learning space, enrollment and financial aid procedures, student support resources, and post-release practices within facility constraints. Financial performance has resulted in a substantial carryforward that positions the program for strategic expansion.

Student services have been successfully adapted to the correctional environment, and faculty deployment has proven effective with over 90% of instructors being full-time tenure-track or tenured faculty. The program has garnered strong support from both COCC and DRCI administration, with students demonstrating high engagement as evidenced by competitive application processes receiving 50 applications for 6 available seats.

While technology access limitations remain the primary operational challenge, program staff have developed effective workarounds and continue to advocate for enhanced computer and Wi-Fi access to improve educational equity and expand LMS utilization.

Next Steps

Building upon this foundation, the PEP leadership team looks forward to expanding the program to include a second cohort, which would maximize facility utilization and enhance program sustainability. It will continue to pursue permanent funding for a full-time PEP Coordinator position to support this growth.

Additionally, the team will explore adding complementary programs, including Associate of Science Oregon Transfer-Business, additional workforce training options, and short-term Pell-eligible certificates to diversify educational pathways for students.

These developments will strengthen COCC's commitment to providing comprehensive, accessible higher education opportunities that support successful reentry and long-term student success while maintaining the program's standards of academic excellence and equity.