

**WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY
HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON INITIATIVE**

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2025**



**4100 FIELD HALL
1601 UNIVERSITY AVE.
P.O. BOX 6906
MORGANTOWN, WV**

ARTWORK BY RAY

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

We are excited to share our first annual report from the WVU Higher Education in Prison Initiative (HEPI).

Our goals at HEPI are to expand educational opportunities for people in prison, to generate experiential learning and research opportunities for WVU students and faculty, and to organize community and campus events that explore solutions to the crisis of mass incarceration.

In everything we do, we are inspired by people in prison who are dedicated to personal and intellectual growth and to creating a better world.

This report focuses on 2025 but includes information from our earlier years. In 2021, Rayna Momen and I began to build a partnership between WVU, Waynesburg University (WU), and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. A year later, we launched an associate degree program at SCI Greene, a maximum-security prison in PA, about 25 miles from Morgantown. WVU offers in-person courses, and WU offers online synchronous courses. The degree in Professional Studies will be conferred by Waynesburg University.

HEPI also coordinates creative writing workshops, book clubs, and a Writing Studio at SCI Greene. We are honored to support initiatives designed and led by students such as a peer mentoring program and an end-of-life advocacy program. You can read about these initiatives and more in this report.

Bryan Stevenson believes that “hope is the enemy of injustice.” We remain hopeful at HEPI. And grounded in our care for one another. Please reach out if you have questions or would like to join our effort. We’d love to hear from you.

Katy Ryan
Founding Director of HEPI

STUDENTS AND PARTICIPANTS

Currently, **15 students** at SCI Greene are enrolled in the associate degree program. HEPI faculty and students advocate for this group to include a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. Each year, approximately **40 people** at SCI Greene, who are not in the degree program, participate in other HEPI programming.

Since 2019, WVU has offered **4 Inside-Out courses at SCI Greene, 1 at SCI Fayette, and 1 at FPC Morgantown**. Over **100 on-campus WVU students** have participated in Inside-Out classes in the past six years. See page 20 for more on this innovative approach to reciprocal learning.

Dakota Swiger from one of Katy Ryan's Inside-Out classes was named a Mountaineer of Distinction in November 2024. In a *WVU Today* article, **Dakota named her experience in the Inside-Out course as one of her most rewarding experiences as a student**, sharing that she was inspired to declare an English minor following the class.

OVERALL STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

15

Students in
the Degree
Program

100+

On-Campus
Inside-Out
Participants

3

Graduate
Assistants

1

Undergraduate
Intern

40

Inside Book
Club
Participants

10

On-Campus
Book Club
Participants

22

Creative Writing
Workshop
Participants

3

Inside Writing
Tutors

PROGRESS TO DEGREE

The 15 students in the degree program take courses in subjects spanning scientific and quantitative reasoning, oral and written communication, humanities, technological competency, information literacy, and social and behavioral sciences to satisfy the 60 credit hours needed to earn an Associate of Arts degree in Professional Studies from Waynesburg University.

Students in the first cohort are approximately 50% finished with degree requirements.

Ten WVU instructors have taught classes with the help of 11 teaching assistants. HEPI offers annual training for new and returning instructors and TAs. See page 15 for more about the HEPI Convening and Teacher Training.

Waynesburg University will teach their first online synchronous class in spring 2026, a Business course titled “Creativity and Innovation.”



13

IN-PERSON
CLASSES



38

CREDIT
HOURS



4

INSIDE-OUT
CLASSES AT SCI
GREENE



8

TOTAL
INSIDE-OUT
CLASSES
5

COURSE OFFERINGS

2022

ENGL 234: INSIDE-OUT DRAMA

Instructor: Dr. Katy Ryan

Teaching Assistants: Destinee Harper and Rayna Momen

This course focuses on twentieth-century and contemporary U.S. American plays that invite audiences to think about matters of justice, human connection, social transformation, and pathways to peace. Students read, write about, and perform plays across a range of theatrical forms such as social realism, epic theatre, workers' theatre, the choreopoem (a mix of poetry, music, song, dance), and documentary theatre.



Photo Credit to DOC Staff in "Greene Holds Closing Ceremony for Inside-Out Program with WVU"

2023

ARSC 293B: INSIDE-OUT THINK TANK

Instructor: Dr. Rayna Momen

This experiential learning course allows students the opportunity to earn college credit for the work they are doing to enhance educational opportunities and develop programming at SCI Greene, through participation in an Inside-Out Think Tank. The Think Tank is composed of WVU faculty and graduate students, undergraduates who have completed at least one WVU Inside-Out Prison Exchange course, and prison staff.

COURSE OFFERINGS

FCLT 281: VAMPIRE: BLOOD & REVOLUTION

Instructor: Dr. Lisa Di Bartolomeo
Teaching Assistant: Kaytely Carpenter

This course examines the phenomenon of vampirism in verbal and visual culture from different periods in various cultures (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Russia, Serbia, France, England, America). Why do vampires capture the imagination, especially of Anglophone readers and viewers? Which historical events or customs have triggered particular enthusiasm for depicting the undead? How has the depiction of the vampire evolved over centuries?

ENGL 101: INTRODUCTION TO COMPOSITION & RHETORIC

Instructor: Dr. Laura Brady
Teaching Assistant: Destinee Harper

Writing helps us share stories, solve problems, and develop ideas. Writing helps us create, reflect, and collaborate. When you write, you connect with others. To help build those connections, this course will ask you to consider goals and purposes for writing; what readers might need or expect; conventions for different writing situations; and ways to avoid trouble spots.

CRIM 461: ISSUES IN CRIME & JUSTICE

Instructor: Dr. Jim Nolan
Teaching Assistants: Danielle Stoneberg and Kaitlynn Youse

What is crime? How do we understand it? How do we respond to it? This course introduces students to the field of criminology. By surveying criminological theory as well as empirical studies, students acquire the ability to think beyond our personal lives and to connect the experiences of individuals with large social structures. The course introduces students to various theories of crime causation, including an examination of classical, biological, psychological, and sociological perspectives on the etiology of crime. Readings will focus on defining criminal acts, learning the theories that can be used to explain the participation or reason for perpetrating criminal acts, and exploring the public policies that are developed to respond to the threat and existence of criminal behavior.

COURSE OFFERINGS

WRIT 490: TEACHING PRACTICUM

Instructor: Dr. Nathalie Singh-Corcoran

Teaching Assistant: Alexis Constantine

All new Writing Studio consultants participate in this one-semester practicum as a way of joining the global writing center community and supporting fellow writers. The practicum introduces you to writing center theory and practice and also asks that you engage in writing consulting for your peers. Along with increasing your understanding of yourself as a writer, you will develop a range of consulting strategies to help you work effectively with diverse students and varied writing situations.

“What I have learned so far will aid me in my desired field of work, advocacy.”

Student Feedback from Program Evaluation

2024

MATH 122: QUANTITATIVE SKILLS & REASONING

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Kearns

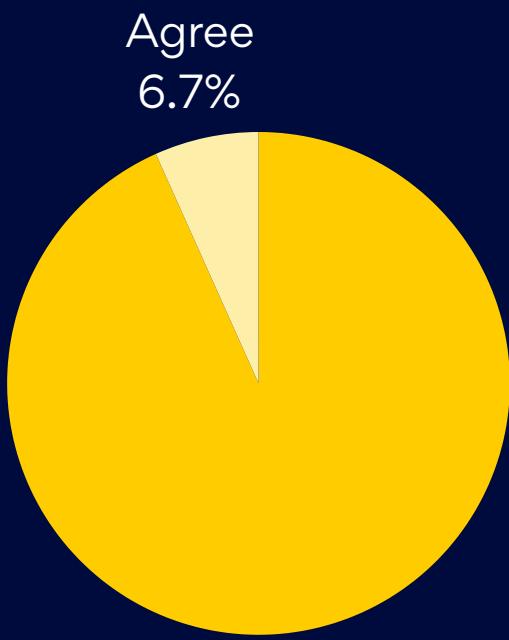
Introductory study of quantitative and reasoning skills needed for success in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

COURSE OFFERINGS

MATH 124: ALGEBRA WITH APPLICATIONS

Instructor: Dr. Clark Metz

Study of algebra with an emphasis on applications for science, business, technology, and social science. Topics include graphing and solving problems using linear, quadratic, square-root, logarithmic, and exponential functions, solving equations, performing operations on matrices.



STUDENT PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTION

Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of instruction I receive in courses offered through HEPI.

FCLT 380: THE HOLOCAUST IN EAST EUROPEAN FILM & LITERATURE

Instructor: Dr. Lisa Di Bartolomeo

Teaching Assistant: Kaytely Carpenter

Extending beyond familiar representations of the Holocaust in the context of several nations of Eastern Europe.

COURSE OFFERINGS

ENGL 102: COMPOSITION, RHETORIC & RESEARCH

Instructor: Destinee Harper, M.A.

This course focuses on developing your knowledge of writing in several areas beyond what you learned in English 101. We will examine how arguments are made through a variety of writing purposes including writing to persuade, evaluate, propose ideas, share research, and test ideas. This course will also place a specific emphasis on conducting research and understanding and assessing information in the digital age. Finally, we will develop a richer sense of how your own research can give your writing power and purpose so that you can confidently apply what you know in your personal, professional, academic, and civic lives.

CRIM 433: INSIDE-OUT PRISON EXCHANGE

Instructor: Dr. Jim Nolan

Teaching Assistants: Azeez Kareem-Ojo, Boymah, Neil, and Rudy

This course provides an opportunity for students to exchange ideas and perceptions about crime and justice, the criminal justice system, corrections and imprisonment. Students engage in guided dialogue and exchange ideas in a way that combines theoretical knowledge with practical experience. The class culminates in a project offering suggestions for improving the criminal justice system. The class addresses many criminal justice topics, such as 1) what prisons are for, 2) the structure of crime and violence, 3) the myths and realities of prison life, 4) victims and victimization, 5) reforming and transforming policing systems, and 6) punishment, rehabilitation and restoration.

2025

HIST 261: RECENT AMERICA: THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1918

Instructor: Dr. Jessie Wilkerson

Teaching Assistant: Siegrid Tuttle

In this course, students explore major topics in the history of modern America, from the rise of capitalism, industry, and the labor movement to the expansion of civil rights and liberation struggles across the twentieth century. The course uses the framework of social history and social movements—that is, how ordinary people collectively organized and fought to make their lives better—to analyze major events in the twentieth century United States.

COURSE OFFERINGS

ENGL 393A: PERFORMANCE STUDIES

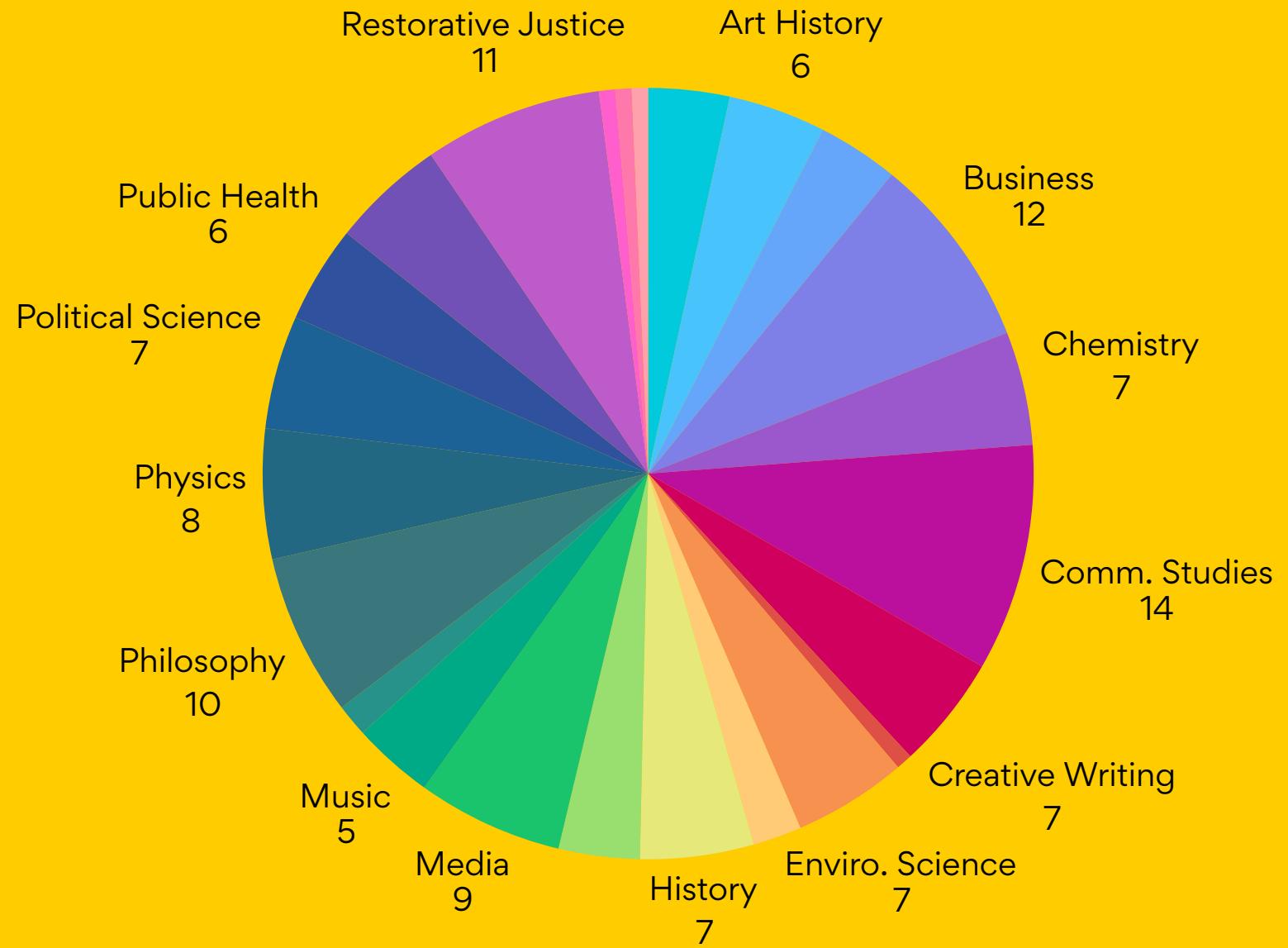
Instructor: Dr. Katy Ryan

Teaching Assistant: Destinee Harper

This course is an introduction to performance studies, a transdisciplinary field that explores both theatrical performances and performative elements in everyday life. This approach expands the meaning of “performance” to include a broad range of human activity: rituals, political events, street demonstrations, legal proceedings, social roles, and sports. To better understand human action across cultures, performance studies practitioners—who might be artists or scholars (or both)—draw from creative practices and multiple disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, theatre, dance, music, communication, media studies, folklore, literature, and history. Through in-class student performances, discussion, and writing, we explore how theatrical practices can help us to understand ourselves and create solutions to social problems.

“My emotional health has improved because through these courses professors, students, and TAs have reminded me what it feels like to be treated humanely again.”

Student Feedback from Program Evaluation



STUDENT INTEREST IN FUTURE LEARNING

STUDENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

One-hundred percent, this program has given a multitude of things that have and will help me upon my release. The abundance of knowledge that I have gained, along with all the skills, like communication etc... I believe I can accomplish, or better yet, **I know I can accomplish anything in my future.**

Student in Program Evaluation



In August of 2025, HEPI collected program evaluations from the cohort of associate degree-seeking students at SCI Greene. The evaluation had a 100% response rate, with 15 of 15 evaluations returned.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Students reported that they:

- Feel more **emotionally prepared** for release
- Have **stronger resumes** and **communication skills**
- Experience an elevated sense of **self-worth**
- Feel increased **confidence** in their ability to take action in their own lives and an enhanced ability to **collaborate** and **problem-solve**
- Have stronger **support systems** and **networks**

100% OF STUDENTS

reported **increased** self-worth, confidence, and collaborative and problem-solving skills

AND

are interested in **continuing** education past AA.

When asked about their biggest educational challenges, 60% of students mentioned lack of **access to technology and research.**

Student Program Evaluation

“Education has been statistically proven to rehabilitate and greatly reduce chances of recidivism. Greater educational opportunities need to be provided to a larger number of people in prison, to a majority of people, to give people a **chance to succeed** in life upon release.”

“I have increased feelings of the ability to **lead** and **speak out** towards injustices and unfairness.”

“I've become accountable not just to myself, but to the group and the program. I'm finally realizing that I'm more than a screw up. I'm learning how to finish tasks. I'm comfortable with not only taking charge in a group, but also not needing to take charge. The courses have helped me to remember that there is great big complicated world outside of not just these walls, but outside of my head. **I've gained confidence that I can deliver in my life.**”

“Learning what I have thus far has taken me to places I would have previously never imagined. It has **given me hope for a better future** for myself and loved ones once released.”

HEPI CONVENING AND TEACHER TRAINING

The annual HEPI Convening and Teacher Training brings returning and new HEPI members together over a two-day period. This event is designed to **build community and provide support to new instructors.**

The first day of training takes place at SCI Greene and is organized and led by inside students. The second day of training takes place on campus and covers challenges of teaching inside, course design, equitable teaching, and a brief history of mass incarceration. We have had **three Convenings since our first in May 2022.** According to our 2025 student program evaluation, **100% of students agree that instructors appear to have been trained well and are prepared to teach in a classroom in prison.**

HEPI invites system-impacted people to share their knowledge at Convenings and compensates them for their work. Darrin Lester led our first teacher training in 2022 and again in 2023. Kenny Matthews acted as a consultant in 2024 and 2025. In 2025, we were joined by Carlee Collins, a former WVU student at SCI Greene who now operates a barbershop in Pennsylvania.



Carlee Collins over Zoom at 2025 Convening



Participants at Inaugural Teacher Training in 2022

INSTRUCTOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

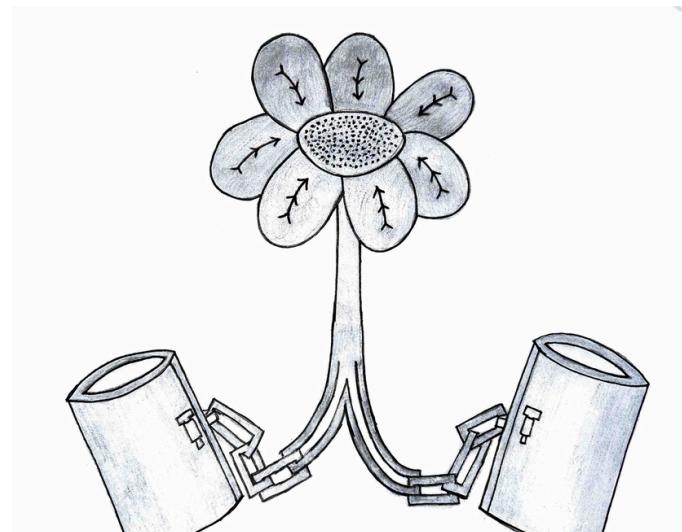
HEPI requests feedback from instructors, teaching assistants, and book club facilitators to learn about their experiences and to improve our program.

Your highest estimates of what these students will do aren't high enough. Their creativity, engagement, intelligence, and respect are **boundless**.

**Lisa Di
Bartolomeo**

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

- All respondents described teaching at SCI Greene as a **life-enriching** and **life-changing experience**.
- All instructors discussed at length how **engaged, committed to rigorous study**, and **thoughtful** the students are.
- Lack of access to the **internet** and to research materials was mentioned as a recurring barrier to learning.



Artwork by Kyle in Response to Marita Bonner's *The Purple Flower*

HEPI PROGRAMMING

In addition to the associate degree program, HEPI helps to develop and sustain educational opportunities at SCI Greene for people who may or may not be in the degree program.

Half of the programs that HEPI supports are peer-led. Students and participants at SCI Greene propose, develop, and do the on-the-ground work of facilitating these programs.



Artwork by Ralphie

Students have proposed programs at SCI Greene that increase opportunities for education, personal growth, and community building. HEPI aids in these efforts by providing financial assistance and bringing in outside experts. Several proposals from Inside-Out classes have been approved and implemented, including a **book club** that rotates through housing units and a **peer-led mentoring program**. Another student proposal for an **end-of-life advocacy program** has been approved and is beginning to be implemented.

The following pages share more about each of the programs that HEPI hosts or supports at SCI Greene.

HEPI PROGRAMMING

Associate Degree Program

Through a partnership between WVU, Waynesburg University, and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, HEPI coordinates an associate degree at SCI Greene. WVU provides 36 of the credits through in-person coursework. Waynesburg offers the remaining 24 credits through online synchronous courses. Upon completion of the 60-credit curriculum, Waynesburg will confer the Associate of Arts degree in Professional Studies.

Inspiring Change Collective

The Inspiring Change Collective was a Think Tank that emerged from a 2022 WVU Inside-Out course at SCI Greene. The Inspiring Change Collective met biweekly for one semester to work on collaborative projects and new programming. The group helped to create a student advisory council, a book club, the distribution of mental health awareness resources, and a peer-led mentoring program. The Think Tank also brainstormed ways to increase vocational training and to showcase creative work through a podcast.

Book Clubs

In partnership with the Appalachian Prison Book Project, HEPI hosts book clubs at SCI Greene. Each semester, the book club rotates between housing units. The main objectives of the book club are to encourage meaningful conversations about literature, to find outlets for creative expression, and to build community and purpose. Each book club includes up to 10 incarcerated members and 3 to 5 outside volunteers, and typically meets once every two weeks for three hours. Participants read fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.

Melvin Book Club Member

Review



***Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens was my favorite book from Book Club.** I was surprised by how good it was. The story was captivatingly told in a manner that allowed you to experience the protagonist's struggles. Her awkwardness in dealing with others and her tenacity and fortitude, which were the foundational cornerstones of her character, paled only to the vivaciousness in which she took to acquiring knowledge through the two most alluring resources we have at our disposal: **learning and reading.** It was a really good read and **an exquisite tutorial on how to build an endearing character.**

HEPI PROGRAMMING

WVU Inside-Out

The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program brings together students who are incarcerated “inside” and on-campus “outside” students to learn together in a semester-long college course. Toward the end of class, students work together on proposals for programming that they would like to see implemented at the prison. Inside-Out aims to create a paradigm shift for participants, encouraging transformation and social change. This program began at Temple University over 25 years ago.

Reconnecting with humanity does a lot to keep me sane. The Inside-Out classes were great. Once the awkwardness goes away, I like how people can look past my current situation...to treat me as an equal. I also like the opportunity to give perspective to people who may make decisions in the criminal justice setting later in their careers.

Student Feedback from Program Evaluation

HEPI PROGRAMMING

End of Life Advocacy

The End of Life Advocacy Program emerged from a WVU Inside-Out Criminology course. Participants complete a death doula training course that provides detailed instruction on how to provide compassionate care to people with chronic illness or those nearing death. Trained advocates assist people in the Medical Unit by providing companionship and helping with access to books, letter-writing, and art materials.



We envision becoming voices for those who are suffering and hope that we can help to make the end of their lives more comfortable.

Thanks to the platform of the Inside-Out program and the support of WVU, our vision has a great chance of becoming a reality.

Todd, HEPI Newsletter Vol. 2, Ed. 2

Peer Mentorship

Students proposed and implemented a peer-led mentorship program. Participants completed a 16-week training with a facilitator from the WVU Purpose Center.

Mentors reflected on their personal values, strengths, motivations, goals, and leadership styles and learned techniques that build rapport and trust. The mentors then developed and offered a 12-week curriculum to teach these new methods of thinking to mentees in the program.

HEPI PROGRAMMING

HEPI Newsletter

HEPI publishes a newsletter twice yearly with updates on courses and alumni and often features book recommendations, artwork, and creative writing. The newsletter is printed and available in the Education unit at Greene, distributed to supporters on the outside, featured on the HEPI website, and available in the HEPI on-campus space in 4100 Field Hall. HEPI volunteers, instructors, and students are encouraged to share updates, creative writing, and art for the newsletter.

EXCERPT FROM
BOOK CLUB OR THE CROOK CLUB

Bones

Although our liberties were confiscated we still have the freedom of thought
Caught up in the Rapture of next character next chapter
As we gather in laughter it all got a grip on me like a Raptor
Mental blocks are lifted
And we're gifted wit a glimmer of the hereafter

Bones, HEPI Newsletter Vol. 2, Ed. 1

Creative Writing Workshops

American fiction writer and essayist Dr. Ann Pancake hosts creative writing workshops with students each semester. Students in creative writing workshops create and revise works of both fiction and nonfiction while participating in feedback cycles with their peers and receiving guidance from Dr. Pancake. These workshops are non-credit-bearing. The workshop lasts 10 to 12 weeks, with a maximum of 10 students.

HEPI PROGRAMMING

Greene Writing Studio

WVU offers a teaching practicum course at SCI Greene, WRIT 490, to prepare students to become tutors at the Greene Writing Studio. Like on-campus students who take this course, students are equipped to tutor peers in developing and strengthening their own writing—structurally, mechanically, and grammatically. They learn a variety of technical and professional styles and forms, such as cover letters, resumes, memos, and articles. They are also prepared to assist with reading comprehension and preparation for the GED. The Writing Studio at Greene is similar to the Writing Studio on campus where students can seek help with writing projects at any stage in the process. The Greene Writing Studio provides job training and professional development opportunities to peer tutors.

Research Partnership with WVU Libraries

Students do not have internet access or direct access to the research library at WVU. We have a partnership between WVU Libraries and SCI Greene that enables students to make research requests. We are also working with JSTOR to provide students with access to recent scholarly articles.

“

This program gave me the courage to go for what I want.

Student Feedback from Program Evaluation

FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

GRANT FUNDING

We are honored to have received several grants. In 2025, we received a three-year grant from the **Mellon Foundation** (\$500,000). Also in 2025, HEPI was awarded a subgrant from the **Pennsylvania Consortium for Higher Education in Prisons** (\$30,000), with support from the Mellon Foundation. In 2021, we received an initial three-year grant from the **Laughing Gull Foundation** (\$195,000). In 2023, the **Sunshine Lady Foundation** awarded HEPI a two-year grant (\$120,000). We are so grateful to each funding partner for their generosity and guidance.

PARTNERSHIPS

To support this initiative, the **Eberly College of Arts and Sciences** funded a three-year Postdoctoral Fellowship and a three-year Graduate Assistant position. We are also thankful to the Eberly College for our new office in Field Hall on the downtown Morgantown campus.

HEPI evolved directly from the work of our incredible partner, the **Appalachian Prison Book Project (APBP)**.

A volunteer-driven community nonprofit, APBP sends free books to people imprisoned in six states and supports higher education in prison. APBP received the **2025 Human Rights Advocacy Award** from the Morgantown Human Rights Commission.

At **SCI Greene**, we are fortunate to work with Deputy Superintendent Mark DiAlesandro and Business Teacher Ms. Amanda Gansor who are committed to high quality educational programming.



HOW TO DONATE

You can support our work by donating at the HEPI webpage. Every amount helps! higheredinprison@wvu.edu.

REENTRY

HEPI maintains a **reentry fund** that supports previously incarcerated people with education expenses, unexpected life events, and the everyday cost of living. We also partner with APBP to award the annual **Darrin Lester Scholarship**, in memory of our late reentry coordinator and friend. This scholarship supports the educational goals of justice-impacted individuals in West Virginia and southwestern Pennsylvania.

Two HEPI students have been released so far. HEPI is working to create a pathway for released students to continue their education at WVU. When possible, we offer financial and professional development support through paid advisory roles and reentry funding.

“

From Aaron Blankenship
*2025 HEPI **Reentry Fund** Recipient*

The money you all have given me through this scholarship has been invaluable and couldn't have come at a better time. I have been able to pick up some bills where relief was much needed and make repairs to my vehicle, making my travels to work events much safer. Thank you all for your efforts helping someone with a background like mine achieve the goal of pursuing higher education. **With your support, I have been able to complete my first semester of a Master's program at Marshall University** that, at one point, I honestly didn't think I would live long enough to see, let alone pursue.

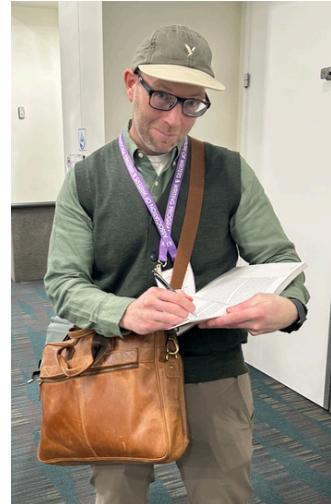
My life before recovery didn't have a lot of hope, and because of that, I fell into the cycle, which I am so avidly trying to help people out of today. I can only hope and pray that the work that I do and the life that I live can bring hope and healing to as many people as possible before my time is up. Hope and healing from years of substance abuse and/or incarceration, just as I have experienced. **I want to assist the next generation to avoid all the pain and anguish that can come from those types of experiences.** Thank you for your assistance in achieving this monumental goal of mine and for contributing to healthier individuals, families, communities, and our society.



Moving Darrin Lester into a New Apartment Post Incarceration

ON-CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

On October 16, 2022, **Renaldo Hudson**, Director of Education at the Illinois Prison Project, gave a powerful talk on the WVU campus titled **“Ending Perpetual Punishment.”** Mr. Hudson also visited SCI-Greene and spoke with students about education and reentry.



Renaldo Hudson and Destinee Harper at NCHEP 2025

In Fall 2023, HEPI partnered with Working Films to host **Beyond Walls**, an online screening of five short abolition films, followed by a panel discussion facilitated by Destinee Harper and Danielle Stoneberg. Panelists included **Sylvia Ryerson, Kenny Matthews, Ale Pablos, and Stephen Lazar.**

Ellen Skirvin, Katy Ryan, and Stephen Lazar presented on APBP and HEPI at the **2025 Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference in Los Angeles.**

Destinee Harper and Katy Ryan presented on APBP and HEPI at the **2025 WV Writer’s Workshop**, and Destinee represented HEPI at the **2025 National Conference for Higher Education in Prison in New Orleans.**

HEPI is partnering with the WVU Native American Studies program to host a screening of **College Behind Bars** on March 4, 2026.



Destinee Harper and Katy Ryan at the 2025 WV Writer’s Conference

ADVISORY COUNCILS

HEPI is guided by an outside Advisory Council composed of WVU administrators, staff, faculty, and students. This Advisory Council meets monthly to review and develop the program. Our work is also guided by feedback from the first cohort of students who constitute the Inside Advisory Council.

OUTSIDE COUNCIL

Ann Pancake, Freelance Writer

Clark Metz (he/him), Ph.D.,
Teaching Assistant Professor, School
of Mathematical and Data Sciences,
WVU

Danielle Stoneberg (she/her), Ph.D.
Student, Sociology; Assistant
Education Coordinator, HEPI

Destinee Harper (she/her), English
Doctoral Candidate, University
Provost Fellow, WVU; Assistant
Program Coordinator, HEPI

Gwen Bergner, Professor Emeritx of
English, Harriet E. Lyon Professor
Emeritx of Women's and Gender
Studies, WVU

Jessie Wilkerson, Associate
Professor, History, University of
Tennessee, Knoxville

Jim Nolan, Professor, Sociology,
WVU; Education Coordinator, HEPI

John Kilwein, Chair, Associate
Professor, Director of Undergraduate
Studies, Political Science, WVU

Joy Carr, Director of University
Advising, Office of the Provost, WVU

Katy Ryan (she/her), Eberly Family
Professor of Outstanding Teaching;
Professor of English; Founding
Director, HEPI

Laura Brady, Emeritus Faculty,
Department of English, WVU

Leslie Wilber, writer, cartoonist,
educator, library worker

Lou Slimak, Assistant Provost for
Undergraduate Curriculum, WVU

Nathalie Singh-Corcoran (she/her),
Eberly Writing Studio Coordinator
and Service Professor of English,
WVU

Omar Yacoub, Service Assistant
Professor of English and the
Assistant Director of
Communication Across
Communication, WVU

Rayna Momen (they/them), Ph.D.,
Postdoctoral Research Associate;
Co-Founder and Program
Coordinator, HEPI

Sophie Slaughter (they/she),
History and WGST double major,
WVU; Reentry Support Assistant,
HEPI

ADVISORY COUNCILS

INSIDE COUNCIL

Boymah, Pennsylvania State Certified Peer Specialist, Certified Mentor, Certified Death Doula, Greene Entertainment Network (GEN) Co-Producer, “Range and Radius” Podcast Host

Brian, Co-facilitator for “Cathartic Therapy” Group, GEN Co-Producer
Derrick, WVU Student, Mentor, Cook, Christian, Strong Minded, Family Orientated, and Supporter of My Community

Dohnavin, 25-Year-Old Student, Loves to Play Sports and Watch Movies

Greg, Father of Three, Master Harley Davidson Technician, Certified Heavy Equipment Mechanic, ASE Certified Auto Mechanic, Gearhead, Passionate, Sensitive, Loving, Eclectic, Dreamer, Hippie, Rastafarian, Christian

Joden, Physical Fitness, Bibliophile, Erudite

Justin, A Human in Progress

Kyle, Certified Mentor, Greene Horticulturist, GEN Co-Executive Producer/Director

Neil, Pennsylvania State Certified Recovery Specialist, Certified Mentor, GEN Executive Producer/Director, “Building with Bones and Pally” Podcast Host

Phil, Impartial, Fallible, Resilient, Hopeful

Ray, Shy at Times, Formal Dancer, Artist, Goofy, Loves to Learn New Things, Best Friend is a Dog Named Blaster

Rudy, Marine Corps Veteran, Father, Friend, and Leader for the People

Sean, Tall, Dark, Handsome, Dapper, Delusional, Odd, Goofy, Sarcastic, Shredder, Caninophile

Simeon, Musician, Artist, Poet, Scholar

Todd, A Christian, a Father, an Advocate for Change through Education, and a Product of Second Chances



Flower Woman by Ray

FUTURE PLANS

SECOND COHORT

With support from the Pennsylvania Consortium for Higher Education in Prisons subgrant, HEPI plans to admit a **second cohort of 15 students** in fall 2026.

“When you awesome people come to this institution to talk, teach us, and listen to us, it means so much to an incarcerated person. HEPI volunteers treat us like we are people, and we begin to believe our importance, and yes, **we find dignity again.**

Student Feedback from Program Evaluation

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BUILDING COMMUNITY

With support from the Mellon Foundation, we will create a **consortium of prison education and reentry programs in WV and southwestern PA**. We plan to award **subgrants** to emerging and established higher education in prison programs in WV.

On March 4, 2026, HEPI will partner with the WVU Native American Studies program to host a **screening of College Behind Bars**, a documentary film about Bard College’s liberal arts degree programs in New York prisons. The film will be followed by a **panel discussion** with a former Bard student featured in the film, **Darryl Byers-Robinson**, and a former member of an APBP Prison Book Club, **Celeste Blair**.

EDUCATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT