



# Education

Education is one of the biggest factors that lowers recidivism rates. With a good education, individuals are more likely to secure jobs when released from prison, leading them to be much less likely to reoffend. Education is one of the most important things a person can have, as it enriches the mind and can teach many important skills.

Research shows that individuals who have participated in educational programs are 3.7 times less likely to reoffend than those who have not. The number one predictor of post-release employment is completion of education programs, and this is important because the number one predictor for not returning to prison is employment.

Every class you take or program you participate in is beneficial. Even if you are not getting a college degree, taking college classes is important because you can always learn something from a class, and you can put any class you take on a resume – even ones that are not college courses. Additionally, if you're taking class credits from universities or local community colleges close to your release, those classes may be able to count towards some educational certificate later.

This section will cover information on educational opportunities while incarcerated as well as how to seek out higher education and job training programs once you're released. How to pay for school and financial aid will also be discussed since that's typically one of the largest barriers in pursuing a degree.



# *Educational Opportunities Available While Incarcerated*

There are numerous educational opportunities for adults in custody, ranging from General Education Development to vocational training. Education is an extremely important resource to utilize while in custody to prepare for release, and any class you take or program you are involved in can be put on a resume, even if it doesn't end up going towards a degree. Below is more information on different types of programs available inside.

## **General Education Development:**

This program is available to adults in custody who have not yet received a high school degree. It allows them to earn their GED certificate. AICs will take five exams that demonstrate skills in writing, social studies, science, literature, and math. Upon successfully completing these exams, individuals will earn their GED certificate.

## **College Courses:**

College courses are available at specific facilities where the Second Chance Pell Grant is offered. These courses are offered by community colleges with whom DOC is partnered, such as Chemeketa Community College, which offers courses at OSP. At Second Chance Pell sites, adults in custody can apply for Pell Grants and take classes. At facilities that do not offer Pell Grants, interested individuals can still take courses by paying for them themselves. The Second Chance Act provides grants to governments and organizations working to reduce recidivism rates and improve the reentry process. At DOC, this includes providing Pell Grants to community colleges that DOC has partnered with to provide educational programs to incarcerated individuals. Even if you do not earn a degree, taking college courses can be extremely beneficial, and any class you take can be put on a resume. It is important to take advantage of the opportunities provided to you: take as many classes as you can and participate in as many programs as possible. Any class you take you can apply to your own situation and can end up benefiting you.

# *Educational Opportunities Available While Incarcerated*

## **Job Training & Apprenticeships:**

Job training and apprenticeship programs provide individuals with unique skill sets for particular jobs. They can be used to gauge interest in a specific field or to develop skills to enter into a field upon release. Different facilities across Oregon offer different programs, all of which are provided by the DOC's partnership with a number of community colleges across the state. Many programs offer participants the opportunity to be paid for their work, providing AICs with the opportunity to learn and be paid at the same time.

### **Job Training & Apprenticeships Offered by DOC:**

- Automotive Technologies
- Construction Technology
- Cosmetology
- Optical Training
- Welding
- Cabinet Making
- Custodial
- Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)
- Limited Energy Technician
- Painting
- Structure Welding
- Sheet Metal Fabrication

## **Education After Release:**

Most educational opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals are through higher education. There are different options for those who choose to pursue higher education after release. While a college degree is not necessary to secure employment, furthering your education is always encouraged and can make it easier to find a job.

## **Different Types of Colleges:**

There are three main types of colleges that offer different programs and each have their pros and cons. Those three types are community colleges, public universities, and not-for-profit private universities. All three will be discussed on the next page if you want to learn more about which may be best for you.



# *Different Types of Higher-Ed Programs*

## **Community College:**

For most individuals who haven't been in school for a while, the path towards a degree starts at community college. Community colleges offer a variety of classes and can be a step along the way to a four-year degree. If a four-year degree is not for you or if you only need certifications or an associate's degree, community college is definitely the best choice for that as well. Community colleges typically have the lowest tuition rates among all types of higher education, and Oregon offers a special grant that is available to individuals who completed their GED while incarcerated. This grant will be touched on more in the Financing Your Education section.

## **Public University:**

Public universities offer four-year programs and have basic entry requirements for individuals with a high school diploma or a GED. Public universities also offer in-state tuition, which is a lower tuition rate for individuals who are residents of the state the college is in. Bachelor's degrees are offered at public universities, and there may also be graduate degrees available depending on the institution.

## **Private University:**

Private universities offer four-year programs with entrance requirements that are typically stricter than those of public universities. Tuition rates are typically the highest of the three types of colleges, but they can also usually provide more generous financial aid packages. Bachelor's degrees are offered at private universities, and there may also be graduate degrees available depending on the institution.

**As a warning, it's important to stay away from for profit universities. If you're unsure if a school is a for profit, you can search it online to quickly find out if it's a for profit university. Many for profit universities seem appealing because their programs are online, but it is incredibly difficult for students at these universities to ever pay off the cost of tuition at these schools.**





# *Applying to College*

## **Step 1: Start the Application**

Most college applications are online, you would go to a college or university's website directly to access their application. Once you open that school's specific application, it will become clear what information you may need to fill out. Basic information on you is typically required, as well as educational history, work history, resume, test score information (see below), and essays are all often pieces of college applications. You can call a school or email their admissions office directly for questions on the application. Remember, it is okay to ask them for help. The schools want your application and multiple candidates, admissions recruiters are typically very nice and eager to help. They're used to speaking to people who are unfamiliar with the process - that's their job. Most of your questions or concerns are probably nothing they haven't heard before.

## **Step 2: Gather Your Information**

The information needed is essentially what's described below. For more specific information on identifying pieces of the application, typically a social security card, ID or driver's license, and things of that nature will be required. Applications may ask about your criminal history and details on it in the application. Don't be discouraged - in most applications, there is space to explain in detail more about the conviction. A good rule of thumb for applying to college is that it's better to provide information where you can, so if that is available to you, provide some background and try to ease the person reading the application.

## **Step 3: Submit the Application**

Once you have filled out all the necessary questions, you can submit the application. Public and private universities typically take months to email and/or mail you an acceptance letter, whereas community colleges will get back to you sooner. Some may give you a rough estimate of when they will send out acceptance information.

# Applying to College

## Admissions Test:

Some colleges require admissions tests to evaluate a student's ability to do college-level work. Admissions tests scores are also required to be eligible for some scholarships. The most common admissions tests are the SAT and the ACT, which both include sections that test reading, English, and math abilities, while the ACT has an additional science section. Both tests also have a writing section.

## Test-Optional Colleges:

Many colleges and universities in Oregon are test-optional. This means individuals are not required to send scores from admissions tests and are not penalized during the application process for this decision. For many individuals, test-optional admissions may be a good option, especially if you have not been able to study for an admissions test. Some schools do require other information, such as submitting an essay, if you choose not to submit test scores.

## Admissions Test Requirements at Oregon Colleges

Find the full list and more helpful information at [oregongostocollege.org](http://oregongostocollege.org)

### No Test Required

- All Oregon community colleges
- Most private career or trade schools

### Test Optional

- Oregon State University
- University of Oregon
- Willamette University
- Eastern Oregon University
- Southern Oregon University

### Test (Usually) Optional

- Corban University
- Pacific University
- Reed College
- University of Portland
- Warner Pacific University



# *Paying For College*

## **Financing Your Education:**

One of the biggest barriers to furthering your education is cost. It is important to know that there are many options available for financing your education, and anyone can use one or more of these options. If you want to go to college, community college is an inexpensive way to start, and these different types of funding can give you a number of ways to be able to pay for additional schooling.

## **FAFSA:**

The FAFSA, or Free Application for Federal Student Aid is where every student should start when looking for ways to finance their education. Every school requires that a FAFSA be filled out, and you can fill one out between January 1st of the year you will be enrolled and June 30th of that school year. Some colleges have more strict deadlines for filling out the FAFSA, so it is important to know the deadlines for the school you hope to attend.

You can find the FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.org](http://www.fafsa.org)

## **Loans:**

Loans are a type of financial aid that you must pay back. Federal loans are better than private loans, as they typically have lower interest rates and more flexible repayment options. Borrow responsibly; only accept what you need and make sure you have a plan for how you are going to pay it back. You will leave college with an obligation to repay any money you have borrowed, so making a plan for how to pay back your loan is crucial as it will affect your future financial decisions.

## **Grants:**

Grants are a type of financial aid that you do *not* have to pay back. This money comes from the federal or state government, and eligibility is usually based on financial aid.





# *Paying For College*

## **Grants Continued:**

Oregon offers two large grants: the Oregon Opportunity Grant and the Oregon Promise Grant. The Oregon Opportunity Grant is a state-funded need-based program which provides financial aid to students with financial need. The Oregon Promise Grant is a grant which helps cover tuition costs for community colleges. For those who completed their GED while incarcerated, the grant is available to individuals who intend to attend community college within six months of their release.

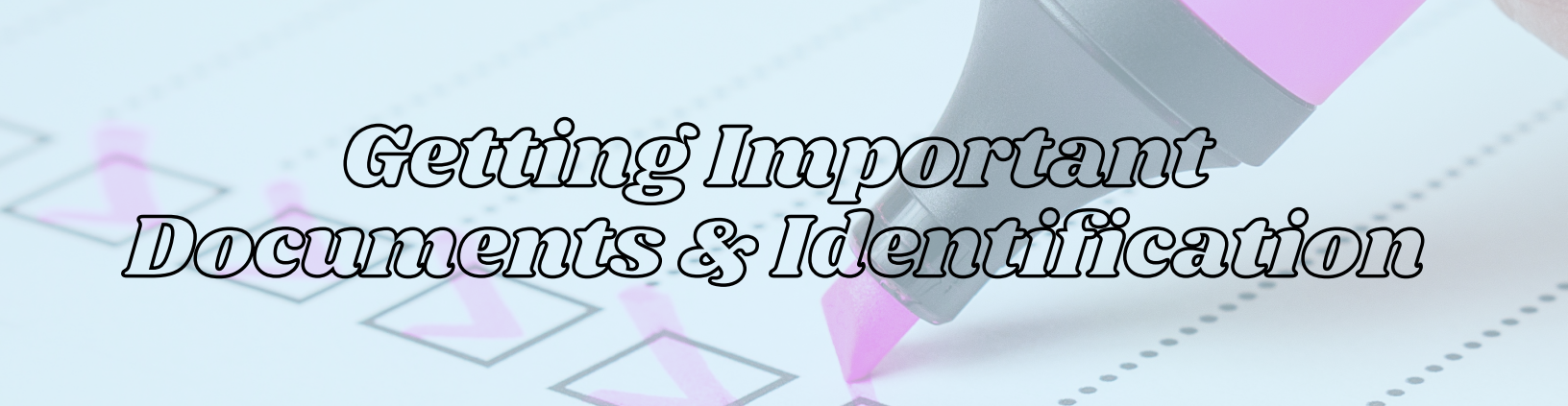
## **Scholarships:**

There are many different scholarships available. Many private organizations offer scholarships to students they believe reflect their mission. This includes individuals such as African-American students or women who want to work in STEM. Essentially, there is a scholarship out there for everything. OSAC, or Office of Student Access and Completion, is an Oregon-specific database compiling over 500 different scholarships for students to apply for. It also provides applications for the Oregon Promise and Oregon Opportunity grants, as well as help filing a FAFSA.

Here is the link to OSAC to find out more about applying to scholarships and other financial aid: <https://oregonstudentaid.gov>

## **Work Study:**

Another option to look into is work study. Work study is for people already enrolled in college. It is when a student works for their college and they have a variety of options for jobs and positions. You can keep the money to pay for personal costs (food, cost of living, etc.) or choose to put it directly towards tuition. You will be notified by FAFSA if you qualify for work study, if you're unsure of whether or not you qualify you can also ask the financial aid office on your campus.



# *Getting Important Documents & Identification*

## **Driver's License and Identification:**

This website link will take you to the Oregon DMV website:

<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/dmv/pages/driverid/licenseget.aspx>. Here you can access information on how to get your driver's license and different ID cards you may need. Recently Real ID has been required for traveling on planes, and you can pay a fee to make your driver's license a Real ID so that you don't have to purchase and worry about carrying a separate ID card. If you don't have or want a driver's license, you can just get a Real ID card at the DMV. You should also schedule an appointment in advance with the DMV to avoid waiting in long lines in person. You can call ahead or schedule an appointment online.

## **Birth Certificate:**

This website link will take you to how to get your birth certificate in Oregon:

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/GETVITALRECORDS/Pages/index.aspx>. They can even mail it to you directly.

## **Social Security Card:**

If for some reason you can't get your social security card back or need a replacement, you can go to this website link to get a new social security card:

<https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/replacement-card.html>