

Research on the Inside: Preparing Incarcerated Students for Success

Katherine Cofell, MLIS 2018  Information School
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Background

Freedom Education Project Puget Sound is a nonprofit that provides a higher education program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women. The accredited AA program previously offered a one-credit research skills course that gave first-year students the ability to complete academic research in a context where there is no access to academic resources. The course was cut due to restrictions on the number of courses that could be offered each quarter, therefore leaving students without instruction to establish this vital skillset. This project is a re-visioning of the research instruction program that involved building information literacy workshops into a required first-year course and constructing and delivering a new curriculum. It is part of a broader effort to expand the research program for FEPPS students.

Needs

Research and library instruction that...

- attends to needs and constraints unique to incarcerated students
- prepares students to communicate research needs
- aligns with the English 101 course
- is gender-responsive, trauma-informed, and non-marginalizing.

Process

- Collaborated with stakeholders to cultivate an appropriate and effective curriculum
- Served as a Research Assistant in Winter quarter to learn about and assess research needs
- Attended multiple trainings to become a FEPPS Instructor and DOC volunteer
- Designed a curriculum
 - Taught the Research Skills Workshops

Outcomes

- Developed 6 adaptable lesson plans
- Provided 18 hours of instruction for 27 first year students
- Created a research handbook for students to reference in future courses

Impact

- Created and piloted a framework for a sustainable research program
- Twenty-seven students gained valuable skills and increased confidence in conducting academic research
- New tools for communicating research needs that give students more agency over their research

Future Visions

- Formalize research workshop series into the first-year curriculum
- Provide library and research instruction sessions in advanced courses
- Collaborate with faculty on assignment design
- Develop a streamlined system for communicating research needs to research partners
- Deepen the relationship between FEPPS and University of Puget Sound to introduce an offline academic database
- Build an internal course management system to deliver source materials to students



Creating pathways to college for women in prison.

Acknowledgements:
Zoe Brown, Kailin Mooney, and the FEPPS Staff
FEPPS Students
Blaine Hunt, English 101 Co-instructor,
Tacoma Community College
Ken McDouall, Librarian,
Washington Corrections Center for Women
Ben Tucker, Social Science Librarian,
University of Puget Sound
Beck Tench, Capstone TA, UW Information School
Johanna Jacobsen Kiciman and the UW Tacoma Library
Jeanne Mitchell