Delaware DOC "Inside-Out" and Postsecondary College Programs

University of Delaware, Widener University Delaware Law School, and Delaware Technical Community College

Research report current through July 10, 2026

Executive finding. The phrase "Inside-Out" refers to a specific shared-classroom model in which campus-based students and incarcerated students study together as peers inside a correctional facility. The University of Delaware and Widener University Delaware Law School have operated programs under that model. Delaware Technical Community College's prison-college initiative is related but distinct: it is a degree-bearing postsecondary program financed through Second Chance Pell and delivered primarily to incarcerated Delaware Tech students, rather than a mixed class of incarcerated and campus students. **[Sources 1–8]**

1. The Main Point: Three Programs Are Often Confused

Institution	Program/model	Who studies together?	Documented Delaware location(s)	Primary academic result
University of Delaware	Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program	UD "outside" students and incarcerated "inside" students	Howard R. Young and Baylor; UD reports three classes across two institutions	College-level course; some incarcerated students may enroll for credit at a reduced rate
Widener Delaware Law School	Inside-Out course	Law students and incarcerated students	A local Delaware correctional facility; Widener materials identify Plummer Community Correctional Center for at least one offering	Experiential law-school course and joint seminar
Delaware Tech	Second Chance Pell / prison college degree program	Incarcerated Delaware Tech students; not ordinarily a mixed campus-prison cohort	Baylor and Sussex; initial plans also identified Howard R. Young	Courses toward an associate degree, reported as Human Services initially and later General Studies

Why the distinction matters. Inside-Out is principally a dialogic, peer-learning course design. Second Chance Pell is a federal financial-aid pathway that supports eligible incarcerated students pursuing recognized postsecondary credentials. A prison may host both types of activity, but one should not be described as the other without confirming the course structure. **[Sources 1, 2, 5, 7, 8]**

2. What the Inside-Out Model Is

The Inside-Out Center describes the model as courses held inside prisons that involve students from higher education and incarcerated students, with dialogue across major social

differences. It began in 1997 through Temple University and later spread internationally. **[Sources 1, 9]**

> ***"facilitates dialogue and education across profound social differences" — The Inside-Out Center***

Typical features include a semester-long course, roughly balanced groups of inside and outside students, circle-based or small-group discussion, common readings and written work, collaborative projects, trained instructors, facility security rules, and a closing recognition ceremony. The model treats incarcerated participants as students and knowledge-holders rather than merely as research subjects or service recipients. **[Sources 1, 3, 4, 9]**

3. University of Delaware Program

3.1 History and current scope

UD states that its students and incarcerated scholars have learned together since 2005. Its current program page says UD and the Delaware Department of Correction offer three classes across two correctional institutions. A 2025 UDaily feature identifies Howard R. Young Correctional Institution in Wilmington and Baylor Women's Correctional Institution in New Castle as current sites. **[Sources 1, 2]**

"Since 2005, University of Delaware students ('outside students') and incarcerated scholars ('inside students') have learned together" — University of Delaware

3.2 Courses and instructors

UD identifies courses including Criminology, the Juvenile Justice System, Drugs and the Criminal Justice System, and Women in Literature and Society. The current UD page names Dan O'Connell, Aaron Kupchik, Ben Fleury-Steiner, and Emalie Rell among instructors. A 2025 feature describes Tanya Whittle teaching Drugs in the Criminal Justice System at Howard R. Young. **[Sources 1, 2, 3]**

The Drugs course examines the relationship between drugs and crime, victimization, international policy, treatment, harm reduction, restorative justice, and criminal-justice responses. Students read common texts, write papers, discuss material in small groups, and complete a collaborative project. UD characterizes the academic rigor as comparable to courses on its Newark campus, while allowing practical adaptations for the correctional setting. **[Sources 2]**

3.3 Credit, cost, and recognition for incarcerated students

UD research materials state that the university unit then known as Professional and Graduate Studies enabled incarcerated students to enroll for credit at a very low rate and provided at least one scholarship per semester for the Baylor course. The materials also describe certificates and individualized achievement letters at the conclusion of the course. Publicly available current pages do not provide a complete 2026 tuition schedule, universal

scholarship guarantee, or a clear statement that every inside participant receives transcripted credit; those details should be confirmed course by course. **[Sources 3]**

3.4 Selection and classroom rules

The available sources do not publish a single statewide eligibility rule for incarcerated participants. Selection is necessarily coordinated among the instructor, the institution, DOC, and correctional education or treatment staff. UD's feature documents strict entry rules for campus students, including clothing and property restrictions, no phones, and black-ink pens only. Facility processing, meals, medication schedules, staffing, lockdowns, and movement can delay or cancel sessions. **[Sources 2, 3]**

3.5 Documented effects

UD describes effects on both groups: outside students gain direct understanding of the criminal legal system and challenge stereotypes; inside students gain access to rigorous learning, normalizing social interaction, confidence, and material they can identify on a résumé. UD also reports that four additional instructors were trained during the two years preceding its current program-page update, supported by the First State First Chance Fund for Higher Education. **[Sources 1, 2]**

A UD-associated three-year qualitative study, published as "Bonds Beyond Bars," reported that outside students' initial stigmatizing perceptions were replaced by interpersonal bonds and more complex views of incarcerated people and the justice system. This is meaningful evidence of attitudinal and educational impact, but it is not the same as a controlled Delaware recidivism evaluation. **[Sources 2, 3]**

4. Widener University Delaware Law School

4.1 Nature of the program

Widener Delaware Law School offers an Inside-Out course in which law students and incarcerated students exchange views about crime, justice, the criminal system, corrections, and incarceration. Widener says the classroom is inside a correctional facility within 15 miles of the law school and that Associate Professor Romie Griesmer offers the course each spring. **[Sources 4]**

"an opportunity for a group of law students and a group of students who are incarcerated to exchange ideas and perceptions" — Delaware Law School

4.2 Delaware location and course details

A Delaware Law course description identifies Plummer Community Correctional Center in Wilmington as the site for a weekly three-hour class. Because course sites can change with DOC approval, staffing, security, and the population housed at a facility, this should be treated as a documented offering rather than proof that every current section remains at Plummer. **[Sources 5]**

Professor Griesmer's published article, "Inside-Out: Bringing Law Students Face-to-Face With Injustice," provides a scholarly account of using the model in legal education. Widener presents the course as experiential education: future lawyers encounter incarcerated classmates directly, test assumptions about doctrine and institutions, and examine the practical operation of punishment and justice. **[Sources 4, 6]**

4.3 Widener University outside Delaware

Widener University also has a broader Inside-Out history at Pennsylvania correctional institutions, including SCI-Chester, involving nursing, psychology, writing, and other disciplines. Those courses demonstrate Widener's institutional experience but are not Delaware DOC programs. They should not be counted as Delaware prison offerings merely because Widener's Delaware Law School participates separately. **[Sources 10]**

5. Delaware Technical Community College: Related but Different

5.1 Second Chance Pell launch

In November 2020, Delaware Tech, DOC, and the Delaware Department of Education announced a pilot under the federal Second Chance Pell Experiment. The original plan was an Associate of Applied Science in Human Services, beginning at Baylor in spring 2021 and later expanding to Howard R. Young. Instruction was expected to be primarily virtual, with Pell aid covering eligible tuition, fees, and course materials. **[Sources 7, 11]**

"a college education can be their pathway to earning a livable wage" — Delaware DOC announcement

5.2 What was actually implemented

The 2022 State of Reentry report says Delaware Tech offered five eight-week Human Services-related courses at Baylor: English 101, Introduction to Human Services, General Psychology, Theories of Counseling, and Dynamics of Group Communication. It reported 19 unique enrollees in the initial cohort, 17 who completed at least one course, and four who completed all five. The report projected expansion to Sussex in March 2023 and ultimately to every Level V facility. **[Sources 8]**

By fiscal year 2023, the Department of Education described the Delaware Tech offering at Baylor and Sussex as virtual instruction toward an Associate Degree in General Studies. The same report listed 46 incarcerated people receiving support for college-level courses across all four Level V institutions, but that total included multiple institutions and correspondence programs, not Delaware Tech alone. **[Sources 12]**

5.3 Current status visible in 2026 materials

The Delaware DOC's 2026 Rehabilitative Programs Directory continues to list a "Human Services Degree" program, indicating that degree-level Human Services instruction remains part of the current rehabilitative-program inventory. However, the publicly indexed description is brief, and the available sources do not establish the current cohort size, exact degree title

at each prison, number of graduates, waiting-list size, frequency of course offerings, or whether the program has expanded to Howard R. Young and James T. Vaughn. **[Sources 13]**

The naming difference—Human Services in the launch and 2022 reentry report, General Studies in the FY2023 education report, and Human Services Degree in the 2026 directory—may reflect a program change, different reporting conventions, or parallel pathways. A definitive answer requires current confirmation from Delaware Tech's registrar/academic affairs office and DOC/DOE prison education administrators. **[Sources 7, 8, 12, 13]**

6. How the Programs Fit Into Delaware Prison Education

Delaware's prison education system is jointly supported by DOC and the Department of Education. The Department of Education lists adult education at Baylor, Howard R. Young, James T. Vaughn, and Sussex, including basic education, GED preparation, the Groves adult high-school diploma, vocational education, life skills, special education, and support for college courses. **[Sources 14]**

Inside-Out courses are a small, specialized part of this larger system. Delaware Tech's Pell-supported degree pathway is a more conventional credential program. Other incarcerated students may use correspondence or distance-learning courses from accredited colleges, with prison education staff serving as liaisons, proctors, and handlers of course materials. **[Sources 12, 14]**

7. Benefits, Limits, and Evidence

7.1 Likely and documented benefits

- Rigorous higher education and intellectual engagement during incarceration.
- Reduced stereotyping and more accurate understanding among campus and law students.
- Communication, writing, teamwork, and critical-thinking practice.
- A constructive bridge between correctional institutions and colleges.
- Transcripted credits or degree progress where the student is formally enrolled.
- Greater educational identity, confidence, and a résumé item for reentry.
- Professional formation for future lawyers, nurses, social workers, researchers, and justice-system personnel.

Evidence caution. The Delaware-specific Inside-Out sources strongly support transformational learning and attitude change, but they do not provide a randomized or matched comparison showing a Delaware recidivism effect. Broader correctional-education research may support reduced recidivism, but that broader result should not be attributed specifically to Delaware Inside-Out without program-level evaluation. **[Sources 1–3, 7, 10]**

7.2 Operational limits and equity concerns

- Very limited seats relative to the incarcerated population.
- Course interruptions caused by lockdowns, staffing shortages, movement, meals, medications, and security processing.
- Unequal access by facility, custody status, sentence length, disciplinary record, academic readiness, disability, and release date.
- Unclear public information on application procedures, waitlists, denials, credit status, and transferability.
- Technology restrictions and dependence on paper or controlled virtual systems.
- Risk that a short Inside-Out course is mistaken for a complete degree program.
- Need for continuity after transfer or release and for advising on Pell, transcripts, and enrollment.

These concerns are supported directly or indirectly by the operational accounts and the uneven program reporting described above. **[Sources 2, 3, 8, 12]**

8. Questions That Remain Unanswered Publicly

1. What are the exact 2026 course titles, facilities, dates, seat counts, and instructors for UD, Widener, and Delaware Tech?

2. How does an incarcerated person apply, and who makes the final selection decision?

3. Are pretrial detainees, people with long sentences, and people near release treated differently?

4. Do all incarcerated Inside-Out participants receive transcripted credit, audit status, or only a certificate?

5. What tuition or fee is charged, and what scholarships are guaranteed?

6. How many Delaware Tech students have earned certificates or associate degrees?

7. What happens to credits when a student is transferred or released?

8. Are accommodations consistently provided for disabilities, literacy needs, and limited English proficiency?

9. What are completion, transfer, employment, and recidivism outcomes, disaggregated by facility and demographic group?

10. Are program denials and interruptions tracked, and is there an appeal or grievance route?

9. Recommended Steps for a Fully Informed Public Record

1. Request a current program inventory from DOC listing each college partner, facility, course, capacity, eligibility rule, funding source, and responsible contact.

2. Request Delaware Tech data on enrollment, credits attempted and earned, credential completion, Pell expenditures, withdrawals, transfers, and post-release continuation.

3. Request UD and Widener course memoranda of understanding with DOC, redacted only as necessary for legitimate security concerns.

4. Publish a single statewide application and referral guide for incarcerated students.

5. Require annual public outcome reporting while protecting student privacy.

6. Create transfer-and-release continuity plans so credits, transcripts, financial aid, and advising follow the student.

7. Expand trained faculty and sections at all Level V facilities, with equivalent access for women and men.

8. Evaluate Inside-Out separately from degree programs so dialogue outcomes, academic credit, credential completion, and reentry outcomes are not conflated.

10. Bottom Line

There is a real Delaware Inside-Out program, not merely a rumor. UD has operated it with Delaware DOC since 2005 and currently reports three classes at two institutions. Widener Delaware Law School also operates a Delaware Inside-Out law course. Delaware Tech is involved in prison higher education through a separate Second Chance Pell-supported associate-degree pathway. Together, these initiatives show meaningful college involvement inside Delaware correctional facilities, but public reporting remains fragmented and does not yet permit a complete accounting of seats, eligibility, costs, degrees awarded, or long-term outcomes. **[Sources 1–14]**

Sources

1. University of Delaware, “Inside-Out Exchange Program.” Official source

2. University of Delaware, UDaily, “UD class behind prison walls” (Feb. 20, 2025). Official source

3. Chrysanthi Leon Research, “Women & Literature Inside Out: Resources and Expanded Material.” Official source

4. Widener University Delaware Law School, “Inside-Out Program.” Official source

5. Widener University Delaware Law School, DEI Courses (Inside-Out course description). Official source

6. Romie Griesmer, “Inside-Out: Bringing Law Students Face-to-Face With Injustice,” 21 University of Maryland Law Journal of Race, Religion, Gender & Class 23 (2021). Official source

7. Delaware DOC/Delaware Tech/Delaware DOE, “Second Chance Pell Program to expand educational opportunities, drive reentry success” (Nov. 19, 2020). Official source

8. Delaware Correctional Reentry Commission, State of Reentry: 2022 Annual Report. Official source

9. The Inside-Out Center, official program website. Official source

10. Widener University, “Reframing Conversations on Criminal Justice By Stepping Inside Prison Classrooms” (Apr. 2, 2020). Official source

11. Delaware Technical Community College Board of Trustees Minutes (Oct. 22, 2020). Official source

12. Delaware Department of Education, FY2023 Prison Education Annual Report. Official source

13. Delaware Department of Correction, 2026 Rehabilitative Programs Directory. Official source

14. Delaware Department of Education, “Prison Education.” Official source