



California Community Colleges

SYSTEM WEBINAR SUMMARY:

Delivering College in Carceral Settings (Mar. 2026)

This [webinar](#) reimagines access through delivering college across districts in carceral settings. Guest presenters included Dr. Patrick Marshall and Captain Gurpreet Gill of [Marshall and Gill Consulting](#), Annette Gutierrez of Gavilan College, and Dr. Seher Awan of Mission College.

What is the System Vision for Justice-Impacted Students?

- The vision for justice-impacted students foresees every student in every setting having access to the same quality higher education delivered by our colleges.
- [Vision 2030](#) charges all colleges to lead with equity and excellence, taking college to all Californians wherever they are. The [Rising Scholars Network](#) is the primary mechanism for achieving this vision for justice-impacted students. Over 30,000 currently and formerly incarcerated students enroll every year across 102 colleges, backed by \$40 million in annual state investment and in partnership with more than 140 correctional institutions.
- Many colleges in the Rising Scholars Network deliver programming inside county jails through partnerships with sheriffs and county systems that require extraordinary commitment from everyone involved. These colleges have developed innovative programs, creating a model that can be replicated across our system.

What are Key Challenges for Programs in County Jails?

- County jails operate under the authority of a county government, managed by the county's sheriff.
- College district boundaries frequently span different counties, each with their own sheriff and county jail, and multiple colleges often serve overlapping parts of the same county.
- Institutional capacity and faculty availability may vary from college to college. A single college partnering with a county jail commits to the full scope of education and support services with the institution's resources.
- Correctional institutions are very highly regulated, with complex processes and red tape that can slow implementation of innovative programming.

How Does the College Collaborative Model Address these Issues?

- Practitioners in Santa Clara County studied how jail-based education operates at the county level and built a partnership framework that converts the challenging

dynamics from an operating constraint to a design feature.

- The model organizes multiple colleges serving a county into a coordinated partnership, drawing on the combined faculty and institutional capacity of the partners. It formalizes the relationship between colleges and the Sheriff's Department through a memorandum of understanding that establishes how colleges and corrections operate together inside the jail facility.
- Research and evidence [show](#) that the model helps to expand access and equity; reduce recidivism and increase community safety; and prepare justice-involved students for workforce-aligned reentry and preparation for life after incarceration, with case management to support seamless transitions.
- [Rising Scholars](#) funding can help provide statewide technical assistance and professional development to support implementation of this model of cross-district collaboration across the state.

How are Colleges Implementing the Model?

- [Mission College](#) was one of the first colleges involved in the [college collaborative](#) model. It focused on finding champions of the justice-involved population among its faculty and staff to ensure they would be passionate about the work. [Student](#) numbers and [successes](#) are increasing. The college points to four pillars of its approach to implementing the model:
 - Access inside – touring jail facilities, surveying students on course offerings, working with correctional institutions on scheduling and security logistics, and understanding technology limitations
 - Pathways that matter – curating curriculum that leads to high demand careers in the community, provides transferable units toward degrees, and builds skills critical for reintegration
 - Wraparound support – providing counselors that offer a full array of support services to incarcerated students and provide basic needs and mental health supports to campus-based students upon release
 - Institutionalization - cultivating support across college leadership, assigning dedicated staff, and integrating FTEF for the courses into ongoing planning.
- Gavilan College's [Higher Aspirations](#) program has more recently joined Mission and other colleges in Santa Clara County to serve incarcerated students in the county.
 - Program staff receive professional development related to trauma, gender responsiveness, and the specific needs of justice-involved students.
 - Properly trained students serve as peer mentors; they are involved in program decision-making to ensure a student-centered approach.
 - Students in the county jail receive both instruction and services, such as academic counseling, career exploration, onboarding for the transition to campus after release, and referrals to community services for other needs.