



Progress Report

Implementation of Online Prison Education Programs and Status of the Oversight Entity's Best Interest Determination

Submitted to the
New England Commission of Higher Education
January 15, 2026



Washington County
Community College

Calais, Maine
Discover Choices • Create Success

Introduction to the Prison Education Programs Substantive Change Progress Report

Washington County Community College (WCCC) submits this progress report in response to correspondence from the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) dated January 16, 2025, in which the Commission requested documentation of the College's progress in implementing its approved online prison education programs and confirmation of the status of the Oversight Entity's Best Interest Determination. The Commission directed that this report be submitted by January 15, 2026, for consideration during the Spring 2026 review cycle.

WCCC's Prison Education Program (PEP) was formally approved by the U.S. Department of Education on June 14, 2024. Under federal regulation, the Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) serves as the responsible Oversight Entity and is required to complete the first formal Best Interest Determination (BID) within two years of initial approval. Accordingly, the regulatory deadline for MDOC's completion of WCCC's first formal Best Interest Determination is June 14, 2026. The purpose of this progress report is to document the College's successful implementation of online prison education programming and to accurately describe the status of the developing Best Interest Determination process within the federally authorized timeline. This report provides a focused update on program implementation and the status of the Best Interest Determination (BID) process.

The process of developing this progress report began in July 2025 with collaboration between the Director of Education, Staff Development, and Training at the oversight entity (MDOC) and WCCC administration. The report was prepared through a coordinated institutional review involving Academic Affairs and Student Services and the guidelines for preparing a progress report provided by NECHE were utilized to develop a complete draft of the progress report. This draft was completed in December 2025 and sent to NECHE for feedback. We implemented the suggested changes and completed and submitted the document in January 2026.

Institutional Overview

Washington County Community College (WCCC), one of seven community colleges within the Maine Community College System (MCCS), is located in Downeast Maine on a 400-acre campus overlooking the St. Croix River at the international border between the United States and Canada. Established by the State Legislature in 1969 as the Washington County Vocational Technical Institute, the College opened in August 1969 in the Calais Armory with an inaugural class of five students enrolled in a two-year automotive technology program.

In September 1970, the College expanded its offerings to include two-year diploma programs in boatbuilding and hotel-resort management and relocated to its present campus in Calais. By the 1972–1973 academic year, the institution introduced its first one-year certificate programs in residential construction, marine electronics, and wood harvesting. During this same period, the boatbuilding program expanded to larger facilities at Quoddy Head in Lubec and later

relocated to Eastport in 1978 with the purchase of the Marine Trade Center, which enabled the expansion of marine programs in commercial fishing, marine finishing, and marine mechanics.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the College continued to grow through the development of new academic programs, expanded facilities, and the construction of its first residence hall. The College now maintains two residence halls providing housing for up to 145 students. In April 1986, the Legislature established the Maine Technical College System under the governance of a Board of Trustees, and in 1989, the College was renamed Washington County Technical College (WCTC). With the approval of a statewide bond initiative, St. Croix Hall was completed on the Calais campus in May 1993.

In 1993, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (now NECHE), through the Commission of Technical and Career Institutions, extended the College's accreditation authority from certificate and diploma programs to include associate degree programs. During the 1993–1994 academic year, the College awarded its first Associate in Applied Science degree in Office Information Systems.

In 2003, Governor John Baldacci signed legislation renaming the Maine Technical College System as the Maine Community College System. On July 1, 2003, WCTC officially became Washington County Community College, a fully accredited community college. Today, WCCC offers associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates across a broad range of career and technical fields, as well as an Associate of Arts in Liberal Studies. The College also delivers job skills training, workforce development programs, personal enrichment courses, community education, and dual enrollment opportunities for high school students.

The Calais campus occupies 41 acres of maintained grounds within the larger 400-acre site and includes seven buildings housing classrooms, laboratories, technical shops, administrative offices, and residential facilities. WCCC also offers many courses through online modalities and received general (blanket) approval for distance education from NECHE in March 2024.

Implementation of our Online PEP and Best Interest Determination

[Prison Education Program Context, Implementation History, and Approved Sites](#)

WCCC continues to uphold the quality of its PEP through an instructional model that fully integrates justice-involved students into the College's existing distance education programs. This commitment to quality is grounded in the College's formal approval process with NECHE. WCCC submitted its initial substantive change request to add prison education instructional locations in March of 2023. Following initial Commission review and the onsite peer evaluation process, the substantive change was formally approved at the November 2024 Commission meeting. Implementation of the PEP has since proceeded under NECHE oversight and in alignment with federal authorization.

Students enrolled through the PEP do not participate in separate or parallel course sections. Rather, they enroll alongside non-incarcerated students in the same online courses, receive instruction from the same credentialed faculty, and engage in the same learning management system environment as all other WCCC distance education students. Academic expectations, course outcomes, assessment practices, and grading standards are identical for all students regardless of enrollment status or instructional location.

Student support services for justice-involved learners are provided through the College's standard distance education infrastructure. Academic advising, tutoring, library services, accessibility accommodations, and other instructional support services are delivered through the same institutional systems used to support all online students. This fully integrated structure ensures instructional consistency, equitable access to academic resources, and uniform application of College academic and student service policies.

The PEP emphasizes structured communication among the College, the MDOC, and enrolled students to support instructional access, continuity of learning, and academic progression. Program evaluation, institutional data review, and student feedback inform continuous improvement efforts. Equity and access considerations are embedded within the College's broader distance education framework.

WCCC sought approval to participate as a Second Chance Pell (SCP) pilot institution in September 2019. On April 4, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education invited WCCC to participate in the Second Chance Pell experiment, and formal approval was granted on June 2, 2020. As federal regulations transitioned from the Second Chance Pell experiment to full Prison Education Program eligibility under Title IV, WCCC submitted a substantive change request to the New England Commission of Higher Education on March 20, 2023.

To support the transition from SCP to the PEP, WCCC administrators participated in a U.S. Department of Education webinar on May 3, 2023, and formally communicated the College's intent to proceed with PEP participation by the federal deadline of May 8, 2023. In coordination with the MDOC, the designated Oversight Entity, WCCC received final PEP applications signed by MDOC officials on January 8, 2024.

Following NECHE approval and MDOC endorsement, WCCC encountered technical challenges related to the Department's modernization of the Electronic Application for Approval to Participate system during the College's Title IV recertification period. These issues were elevated to federal oversight staff for resolution. The U.S. Department of Education formally approved Washington County Community College's PEP on June 14, 2024. Following this federal approval, WCCC began utilizing Pell Grant funding for eligible justice-involved students enrolled in approved distance education programs at four authorized MDOC facilities.

WCCC's Prison Education Program is currently approved for delivery at the Southern Maine Women's Re-Entry Center in Windham, the Women's Center in Windham, the Mountain View Correctional Facility in Charleston, and the Downeast Correctional Facility in Machiasport. At

these authorized locations, WCCC offers the Entrepreneurship Certificate, Business Management Associate in Applied Science, Production Technician Certificate, Production Technician Associate in Applied Science, Human Services Associate in Applied Science, the Substance Use and Recovery Certificate, and the Liberal Studies Associate in Arts through its distance education platform.

Washington County Community College remains committed to ensuring that justice-involved individuals within Maine's correctional facilities have equitable access to high-quality postsecondary and workforce educational opportunities through full participation in the College's distance education programs.

Implementation of Online Prison Education Programs

Since receiving NECHE approval for online and hybrid prison education delivery, WCCC has fully implemented online instructional modalities within its approved prison education programs. These programs are delivered through secure, correctional-approved learning management platforms and adhere to the same academic standards, course outcomes, and faculty oversight expectations as instruction delivered on the Calais campus.

Courses offered through the online prison education modality are aligned with fully credentialed, campus-based sections. Faculty teaching in the prison education programs hold the same qualifications as faculty teaching on campus and participate in the College's normal processes for curriculum development, course assessment, and academic review. Course shells, syllabi, grading practices, and learning outcomes are standardized across modalities to ensure instructional consistency. Student work is assessed using the same academic integrity standards applied to all enrolled students.

Academic advising for justice-involved students is conducted through WCCC's centralized distance education advising model and is adapted to correctional facility constraints. At WCCC, a designated Student Navigator serves as the primary academic advisor for incarcerated students and conducts in-person advising visits at each facility at least once per semester to provide individualized course planning, degree progress review, and academic guidance.

In addition to these in-person advising visits, the Student Navigator and advising staff provide ongoing support through secure, correctional-approved communication channels. Students are assigned advising support upon enrollment and receive assistance with program planning, course sequencing, degree audits, and academic progress monitoring throughout incarceration and continue with the same dedicated advisor post-release to ensure continuity of support.

Advising is intentionally structured to account for anticipated length of incarceration, potential facility transfers, and projected release dates. The student navigator works closely with students to align coursework with credential pathways that maximize credit applicability, and all students have the opportunity to continue their distance education program post-release.

This advising model mirrors the academic advising services provided to non-incarcerated distance education students while incorporating additional proactive outreach and on-site engagement to address the unique operational realities of correctional education.

Since receiving federal approval, WCCC has focused on stabilizing operational delivery, confirming faculty deployment, strengthening student advising coordination, and validating data reporting systems necessary for long-term program monitoring and federal compliance. A total of 104 justice involved students have matriculated as part of WCCC’s SCP and PEP participation. The students have collectively earned credit for 88.5% of all credit hours attempted (2,919 credits earned out of 3,299 attempted). The average Grade Point Average of all students who have matriculated in SCP and PEP is 3.15. A total of seventeen credentials have been awarded to ten graduates, nine certificates and eight associate in applied science degrees.

SCP and PEP Student Outcomes as of Fall 2025 Semester		
	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Students
Academically Dismissed	6	5.7%
Still Enrolled	26	24.8%
Left with ≥ 30 Credits	30	28.6%
Left with < 30 credits	49	46.7%
Graduated	10	9.52%

The College has conducted an initial qualitative and quantitative review of enrollment patterns among students who exited the program with fewer than 30 credits and those who exited with 30 or more credits. These patterns are largely attributable to structural factors inherent to correctional education rather than academic performance or program quality.

Students who exited with fewer than 30 credits most commonly did so due to unanticipated facility transfers, changes in custody status, or release dates that occurred mid-semester. In many cases, these students were in good academic standing at the time of departure and exited for reasons outside of the College’s control. Students who exited with 30 or more credits frequently did so due to release from incarceration prior to degree completion. While these students made substantial academic progress, reentry-related challenges often delayed or interrupted immediate reenrollment following release.

Academic performance data indicate that stop-out behavior is not correlated with academic difficulty. Justice-involved students in SCP and PEP have earned 88.5% of all attempted credits and maintain an average cumulative GPA of 3.15, suggesting strong academic persistence while enrolled. These findings have informed institutional planning and directly shape the College’s

expanded focus on structured reentry advising and post-release continuation supports described later in this report.

Oversight Entity and Status of the Best Interest Determination

WCCC's PEP was formally approved by the U.S. Department of Education on June 14, 2024. In accordance with 34 CFR § 668.241(d), the responsible Oversight Entity (MDOC) is required to complete the first formal Best Interest Determination (BID) within two years of this initial approval, establishing a regulatory deadline of June 14, 2026, for completion of the first full determination.

At the time of submission of this progress report, the formal BID process remains in active development by the MDOC. All oversight entity BID-related materials, including the BID policy, institutional self-assessment, and student and faculty survey instruments, are currently in draft form and are being refined as part of the MDOC's formal methodology. These materials were developed in collaboration with system partners with intent to support the MDOC's pending review and final determination. They are attached as appendices to this report.

In accordance with 34 CFR § 668.241(b), WCCC participated as a stakeholder in the MDOC-led Best Interest Determination process. WCCC representatives serve as participants on the BID stakeholder group and actively engage in the MDOC's feedback and review processes. Stakeholder input from institutional leadership, faculty, student services, correctional partners, workforce representatives, and students is being incorporated into the MDOC's methodology in preparation for the initial formal determination. This stakeholder engagement is consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR § 668.241(b), which requires that the BID be made through a feedback process considering input from relevant stakeholders and in light of the totality of the circumstances.

In preparation for the initial formal Best Interest Determination, WCCC and the MDOC completed substantial preliminary implementation work aligned with the factors identified in 34 CFR § 668.241(a)(1). The BID self-assessment documents current institutional practices relate to academic oversight, instructional delivery, advising, credit transferability, and reentry planning. WCCC will provide details to the MDOC focused on the four required elements of the BID process, including faculty credentials and instructor stability, credit transferability and degree applicability, academic and career advising during and after incarceration, and the ability to continue education post-release. These materials will serve as evidentiary documentation in support of MDOC's formal review. These preparatory elements are currently being documented and will be formally reviewed by the Oversight Entity as part of its pending analysis.

Consistent with 34 CFR § 668.241(f), WCCC is maintaining full documentation of the evolving BID methodology, stakeholder input processes, and draft evaluation materials for review by NECHE and for future federal reporting and public disclosure. Final documentation of the initial BID will be submitted in accordance with the required federal timeline following Oversight Entity (MDOC) completion.

The College anticipates that the MDOC's first formal BID review will be completed on or before June 14, 2026, consistent with federal requirements. Subsequent evaluations will occur in alignment with the institution's Program Participation Agreement (PPA) renewal cycle and any additional monitoring conducted by the Oversight Entity (MDOC) under 34 CFR § 668.241(e).

WCCC continues to refine its internal monitoring systems to ensure compliance with ongoing documentation and reporting requirements associated with the Prison Education Program and the Best Interest Determination process.

Future Institutional Plans Related to PEP

WCCC's future plans for the PEP are centered on expanding academic opportunities, strengthening student transition planning, and ensuring sustained alignment with federal and accreditor expectations. A primary institutional goal is the development and future approval of Computer Technology program offerings for justice-involved learners. As part of the College's New England Prison Education Collaborative (NEPEC) [Accelerator Grant Project](#), WCCC is developing a sequence of short-term, stackable online certificates that lead directly into the Associate in Applied Science in Computer Technology. These certificates are being designed for delivery through WCCC's established distance education infrastructure, allowing justice-involved students to participate in the same courses as non-incarcerated learners. Once curriculum development is complete, WCCC will pursue appropriate approval to add these programs to the list of authorized PEP offerings.

WCCC recognizes that the period immediately following release from incarceration represents a critical transition point for student persistence and credential completion. Students who exit incarceration with substantial academic progress often face competing demands related to employment, housing, transportation, technology access, and compliance requirements that can delay or interrupt continued enrollment.

To address these challenges, WCCC is intentionally strengthening post-release transition support through its participation in the New England Prison Education Collaborative (NEPEC) Accelerator Project. Grant funding supports a part-time position that focuses on reentry advising and curriculum pathway coordination, with an emphasis on transitional advising, alignment between stackable certificates and degree pathways, and coordination between the College and the Maine Department of Corrections as new academic opportunities are implemented.

This role supports students approaching release by assisting with academic planning, modality transitions, reenrollment processes, and application of previously earned credits toward continued degree completion. The position also contributes to institutional readiness for the Oversight Entity's future Best Interest Determination and Title IV reporting requirements associated with Prison Education Program participation.

These efforts are designed to mitigate common post-release barriers, improve continuity of enrollment, and strengthen long-term educational outcomes for justice-involved students who seek to continue their studies following incarceration.

WCCC will continue to integrate justice-involved students fully into its distance education systems and maintain consistent academic standards, faculty expectations, and student support practices across all online modalities. As additional program data become available, the College will expand its longitudinal monitoring of student outcomes to support both NECHE review and future Oversight Entity evaluations.

Through these activities, the College aims to strengthen the long-term sustainability of the PEP while expanding access to high-quality postsecondary opportunities for students in Maine’s correctional facilities and increase justice-involved persistence by five percent each year and credential attainment by three percent each year, as measured through annual tracking of enrollment and completion outcomes for students enrolled in approved prison education programs.

Conclusion

WCCC implemented its approved online PEP in accordance with NECHE approval, federal authorization, and institutional academic standards. Justice-involved students are fully integrated into WCCC’s distance education courses and receive the same instruction, services, and academic expectations as all other distance education students. Pell Grant funding has supported eligible students at four approved MDOC facilities since June 2024.

The MDOC, as the designated Oversight Entity, continues development of the formal Best Interest Determination in accordance with the federal two-year timeline following U.S. Department of Education approval. Stakeholder training will occur mid-spring semester, data from WCCC will be finalized and provided to MDOC by mid-May, and the MDOC will share data with stakeholders to make the determination by early June. WCCC remains fully engaged as a stakeholder in this process and will provide all required documentation upon completion of the initial Best Interest Determination by the June 14, 2026 federal deadline.

Appendix A: MDOC Draft BID Policy

Policy: Best Interest Determination (BID) for Title IV–Eligible Postsecondary Prison Education Programs

Policy No.: TBD

Effective: TBD

Approved by: Commissioner

Purpose

This policy establishes how the Department, as the oversight entity, conducts the Best Interest Determination (BID) for each Pell-eligible prison education program (PEP) provided by external degree-granting institutions in Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) facilities. It sets an evidence-based, stakeholder-informed, and documented process to determine whether each PEP is operating in the best interest of students.

Scope

This policy applies to all Title IV Pell-eligible postsecondary programs operating inside DOC facilities that are delivered by external colleges or universities under Memoranda of Understanding with the Department. It does not apply to secondary education, HiSET, non-Pell programs, or programs operated solely by the DOC.

Definitions

Oversight Entity: The state department of corrections responsible for correctional facilities.

Prison Education Program (PEP): A Pell-eligible postsecondary program approved by the U.S. Department of Education and delivered in a correctional facility.

Provider: The external college or university operating the PEP.

Stakeholder Panel: Individuals and organizations consulted during a BID as required by regulation and this policy.

Regulatory Timelines and Frequency

Initial BID: Conducted within two years of U.S. Department of Education approval of the PEP.

Recurring BID: Completed at least 120 days before each Program Participation Agreement (PPA) recertification; PPA cycles are generally every six years.

Interim Reviews: The Department may require additional reporting or BIDs at its discretion between PPA cycles.

Required BID Criteria (Substantially Similar Standard)

The Department assesses performance against four required criteria, applying a “substantially similar” standard that accounts for the unique geographic and operational constraints of prison education programs:

1. **Instructors:** Experience, credentials, and rates of turnover or departure are substantially similar to non-PEP programs at the institution.
2. **Credit Transferability and Applicability:** Credits earned in the PEP transfer and apply substantially similarly to those at comparable, non-PEP programs at the same institution.

3. Academic and Career Advising: Advising while confined, pre-release, and post-release is substantially similar to services for non-incarcerated students at the same institution.
4. Post-Release Continuation: Formerly incarcerated students can fully transfer credits and continue their programs at any institutional location offering a comparable program, including by the same mode of instruction.

Methodology

The Department requires quantitative indicators and narrative context for each criterion (for example, faculty degree and experience distributions; articulation agreements; advising policies and participation; continuation and transfer processes). Providers must submit counts or percentages and a brief narrative that situates results within PEP constraints.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Department will convene a Stakeholder Panel that includes representatives of confined or incarcerated individuals, organizations representing them, the State Higher Education Executive Office, and the relevant accrediting agency.

The Department may include additional stakeholders such as reentry organizations, employers, labor and workforce partners, or consortia.

Feedback may be collected individually or in groups and may be written or verbal. When verbal, the Department will keep minutes or notes.

Stakeholder input will inform the Department's decision regarding whether the institution meets the Best Interest of the Student.

Provider Submissions and Data Sharing

Using Department templates, Providers submit data and short narratives aligned to the required criteria. Templates cue:

- Instructors (degrees, years of professional/teaching experience, turnover) and a campus comparison.
- Credit transferability and applicability (articulation agreements, transcript evidence).
- Advising models and participation/volume (in-facility, pre-release, post-release). Continuation policies and re-enrollment processes or attestations.
- Narrative context is required with each data point to reflect facility constraints and operations.
- Data Sharing Agreement (DSA): The Department and Provider maintain or revise a

DSA to enable secure exchange of the data needed for the BID and other required reporting.

Optional Additional Indicators

The Department may evaluate additional indicators—such as completion, continued enrollment post-release, job placement, earnings, or student/faculty survey results—ensuring measures are strategic, measurable, and relevant and are used in light of the totality of the circumstances. Any optional criteria are clearly labeled in templates and do not supersede the required criteria.

Evaluation and Decision Standards

Review Principles: Department reviewers synthesize Provider submissions, stakeholder input, and operational context, weighing the totality of the circumstances.

Rubric: The Department uses a Does Not Meet / Meets / Exceeds Expectations rating by criterion and overall.

Scoring (if used): Thresholds may be set across required or all criteria; trade-offs are documented upfront for transparency.

Outcomes:

- Pass: PEP meets BID standards.
- Provisional Pass: PEP must implement a corrective action plan with dates and interim review.
- Fail: PEP must submit a student protection plan and cease Pell participation.

Student Protection and Continuity

If a PEP fails the BID, the Department will require the Provider to plan for student continuation (for example, credit transfer and re-enrollment at another location or mode where a comparable program exists) and will coordinate communication so students understand options and supports.

Notification and Recordkeeping

Written Decision: The Department will issue a formal BID outcome letter to the Provider, summarizing findings and any required corrective action. Providers maintain documentation and submit the oversight entity's determination and accreditor documentation to the U.S. Department of Education as required.

The Department retains stakeholder feedback records (minutes and written comments), its analysis, and the final determination.

Continuous Improvement

After each BID cycle, the Department will refine methodology, templates, and MOUs based

on lessons learned and stakeholder input. The Department will maintain a forward BID calendar keyed to each Provider’s PPA cycle.

Appendix B: Draft BID Self-Assessment

Table 1: Listing of Individual Faculty in Academic Programs at the Prison Education Program				
Instructor Name	Highest Credential	Years of Professional Experience	Years of Teaching Experience	Years Employed by College as Instructor

Table 2: Comparison of Academic Faculty Working in the Prison Education Program to the Main Campus		
% of Faculty with Doctoral Degree		
% of Faculty with Master’s Degree		
% of Faculty with Bachelor’s Degree		
% of Faculty with Less Than Bachelor’s Degree		
% of Faculty with 10+ Years Professional Experience		
% of Faculty with 5+ Years Professional Experience		
% of Faculty with 10+ Years Teaching Experience		
% of Faculty with 5+ Years Teaching Experience		
% of Faculty with 10+ Years Employed by College		
% of Faculty with 10+ Years Employed by College		

College Annual Reporting Requirements:

Transferability Between PEP and Non-PEP Programs

Table 1: List of Identical Programs with Identical Completion Requirements			
PEP Program	PEP Program Code	Non-PEP Program	Non-PEP Program Code

Table 2: List of Identical Programs with Non-Identical Completion Requirements			
PEP Program	PEP Program Code	Non-PEP Program	Non-PEP Program Code

Table 1: List of PEP Programs Not Offered to Non-PEP Students			
PEP Program	PEP Program Code	Non-PEP Program	Non-PEP Program Code

Table 4: Comparison of Identical Program with Non-Identical Program Completion Requirements	
Comments:	

1. **Faculty Name (Optional):** [Text Field]

2. **Where do you teach?**
 - a. University of Maine at Augusta
 - b. Washington County Community College
 - c. Western Governors University
 - d. Other [Text Field]

3. **What is your role at your institution?**
 - a. Adjunct / Part-Time Faculty
 - b. Full-Time / Tenure-Track Faculty
 - c. Non-Tenure Track / Lecturer
 - d. Visiting Faculty
 - e. Clinical Faculty / Practitioner-in-Residence
 - f. Instructor
 - g. Professor Emeritus / Emerita
 - h. Other [Text Field]

4. **Highest Level of Education:**
 - a. High School Diploma or GED
 - b. Some College, No Degree
 - c. Associate Degree (AA/AS)
 - d. Bachelor's Degree (BA/BS)
 - e. Master's Degree (MA/MS/MEd, etc.)
 - f. Doctoral Degree (PhD, EdD, etc.)
 - g. Professional Degree (JD, MD, DDS, etc.)
 - h. Other [Text Field]

5. **Years Teaching Postsecondary Courses:**
 - a. 1–2 years
 - b. 3–5 years
 - c. 6–10 years
 - d. 11–15 years
 - e. 16–20 years
 - f. 21–25 years
 - g. 26–30 years
 - h. 30+ years

6. Years Teaching at Current Institution:

- a. 1–2 years
- b. 3–5 years
- c. 6–10 years
- d. 11–15 years
- e. 16–20 years
- f. 21–25 years
- g. 26–30 years
- h. 30+ years

7. Are you in a tenured or tenure-track position?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. Number of 3-Credit Courses Taught per Semester: [Numeric Field]

9. Number of PEP-Specific 3-Credit Courses Taught per Semester: [Numeric Field]

10. Have you previously taught in a correctional setting outside PEP?

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. Please tell us the modalities and locations of courses you teach and an estimation of the number PEP students you typically teach per course.

Modality	Number of Courses	Number of PEP Courses	Courses Taught at MDOC Facility	Estimated # of PEP Students
In Person on Campus	[]	[]	[]	[]
Asynchronous Online (no live classes)	[]	[]	[]	[]

Modality	Number of Courses	Number of PEP Courses	Courses Taught at MDOC Facility	Estimated # of PEP Students
Synchronous Online (live video-conference)	[]	[]	[]	[]
Hybrid	[]	[]	[]	[]
Other	[]	[]	[]	[]

12. Students who enroll in your courses typically do so as part of earning what type of credential? Select all that apply.

- Associate of Arts
- Associate of Science
- Bachelor of Arts
- Bachelor of Science
- Certificate
- Micro-Credential
- Other [Text Field]

13. Which of the following ways have you taught PEP students? Select all that apply.

- Taught inside a correctional facility
- Taught PEP-specific courses
- Taught regular courses that included PEP students
- Other [Text Field]

14. Have you engaged with PEP students in any of the following ways? Select all that apply.

- Considered hiring an incarcerated student as a student worker or teaching assistant
- Referred students to internships or work-based learning opportunities
- Mentored students academically or professionally outside the classroom
- Collaborated with students on research or projects
- Have not engaged with students in these ways

Other [Text Field]

Faculty Perspectives

The questions below ask you to share your perspective on support for faculty teaching in PEP programs or to PEP students.

15. Please rate your level of agreement for the following statements. Rate your agreement: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree, N/A = Not Applicable or Do Not Know

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
I received sufficient training and orientation to teach effectively in PEP.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel supported by PEP administration when addressing challenges in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am rarely asked to adjust my course due to DOC restrictions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The technology and learning platforms used by students function reliably and support my teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In general, PEP and non-PEP students are academically prepared to the same degree.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students with disabilities receive appropriate academic accommodations in a timely manner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel the institution and DOC collaborate effectively to support student learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PEP and non-PEP students complete my courses at similar rates.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The institution provides guidance or training to faculty on how to integrate PEP students respectfully into mixed classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-PEP students receive orientation or information that normalizes having PEP students in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional policies and communication help reduce stigma for PEP students in mixed classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Typically, the presence of PEP students benefits the classroom experience for non-PEP students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The institution actively works to create a respectful and inclusive classroom environment for all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Regarding current PEP student support, please rate your level of agreement for the following statements.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Students receive timely academic or career guidance from the institution.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students are supported in setting clear academic and career goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students with disabilities receive appropriate academic accommodations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The institution effectively communicates the ADA process to students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students have access to necessary resources (books, technology, tutoring) to succeed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. Regarding PEP student support post-release, please rate your level of agreement for the following statements.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Students receive guidance to continue education or training after release.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students are connected to employment or internship opportunities post-release.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students receive support navigating reentry services, such as housing, counseling, or transportation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The institution maintains communication and support for students after release.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students are aware of and able to access post-release academic accommodations if needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post-release students are integrated into classroom activities in a way that normalizes their participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The institution actively works to create a respectful and inclusive environment for post-release students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. In your experience, what supports have been most effective for students during incarceration? [Text Field]

19. In your experience, what supports have been most effective for students after release? [Text Field]

20. What improvements could the academic institution and/or the Maine Department of Corrections make to better support students both during incarceration and post-release? [Text Field]

21. Please discuss any issues or concerns regarding the Prison Education Program at your institution. [Text Field]

22. How could the institution you work for and/or the Maine Department of Corrections improve the faculty and/or student experience? [Text Field]

23. What could your institution or the Maine Department of Corrections do to help you perform your job better? [Text Field]

Appendix D: Draft BID Student Survey



Best Interest of the Student Determination

Student Survey

The Maine Department of Corrections is committed to ensuring that every postsecondary education program offered to residents is in the best interest of the students it serves. To help us make informed decisions, we are asking students to share their experiences and perspectives about the program. Your feedback will help us understand what is working well, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that education opportunities are supportive, equitable, and effective.

Students may submit their responses anonymously and all responses will be used only to improve educational programs and support student success.

Thank you for taking the time to share your honest feedback!

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About you

We're asking about various factors of student's identity because we want to ensure that we are providing equitable access across to people of all identities, regardless of their age, gender, conviction, sentence length, etc. Respondents may elect to not provide demographic information should they wish to remain completely anonymous.

Student Name (Optional)

What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino
- Prefer not to say

What is your race?

- American Indian Or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Prefer not to say
- White

What is your age?

What is your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

Please identify all facilities / locations from which you have participated in the PEP program.

- Maine State Prison
- Bolduc Correctional Facility
- Southern Maine Women's Correctional Facility
- Maine Correctional Center
- Mountain View Correctional Facility
- Downeast Correctional Facility
- Leading the Way
- Waypoint
- Other

Have you participated in any other Higher Education PEP?

- Yes
- No

Are you currently incarcerated? *

- Yes
- No

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If student responds "Yes" to incarceration, additional questions are asked:

Are you currently incarcerated? *

- Yes
- No

Do you intend to continue in this academic program after release (if you have not yet earned your credential of value)?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- N/A - I should be complete by then.

How long until you are released?

- Less than 12 months
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- 3-4 years
- 4-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- More than 15 years
- Not Applicable

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They will not be asked to answer any of the “Post Release Experience” questions.

About Your Education

We will use this information to evaluate whether there are differences in access / quality / outcomes by program and whether the programs offered align with learner interest / choice and workforce needs.

Which academic institution are you completing this survey about?

- University of Maine at Augusta
- Washington County Community College
- Western Governors University
- Other

What type of credential are you working on earning (or did you earn) at this institution? Select all that apply.

- Associate of Arts
- Associate of Science
- Bachelor of Arts
- Bachelor of Science
- Certificate
- Micro-Credential
- Other

What is/was your major?

What is/was your minor (if applicable)?

Is your Major or Minor aligned with your career goals? In other words, are you enrolled in your preferred major/minor?

- Yes
- No
- Other

Please explain your answer regarding preferred major/minor.

When did you begin taking courses with this PEP?

MM/DD/YYYY📅

Date

Have you already earned a credential of value with this institution (certificate, mini-credential, associates, etc.)?

- Yes
- Not yet

How many 3-credit courses do you typically take per semester?

Please Select▼

Briefly describe why did you decided to enroll in this program.

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About Your PEP Experience

The questions below ask you to consider your experience with the institution for which you are filling out this survey **during incarceration**. Respondants that have returned to the community will be asked questions about their post-release experience in another section.

All students will be asked for general feedback about what DOC and the academic institution can do to improve the academic experience at the end of this survey.

What student services have been offered to you by the Institution? Select all that apply.

- Career Counseling (i.e. discussed what jobs are available with your chosen degree)
- Academic Advising (i.e. help determining what classes to take)
- Individualized Program Planning (i.e. designing the degree program around your individual needs)
- Financial Aid / FAFSA
- Reentry Support
- Other

For the following questions, please rate your level of agreement using the scale below. Select the number that best matches your experience (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree), 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). There are no right or wrong answers. Your feedback will help us understand your experience in the PEP program and improve it for future students.

	1	2	3	4	5
I was able to receive academic or career guidance in a timely manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor helped me set clear academic goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was challenged to think critically and apply what I learned.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor helped me understand the steps I need to take toward my career or education plans.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advising sessions connected me to resources (inside or outside of PEP) that supported my progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the skills I gained will be useful in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Of the following Academic and Student Life services commonly available at academic institutions, which have been made available to you as part of your PEP?

	Is this available at your institution?	Did you access this resource?	Why or why not?
Athletics (formal sporting opportunities like basketball or soccer)	▼	▼	▼
Fitness Resources (gym, track, etc.)	▼	▼	▼
Wellness Resources (faith/spirituality support, peer support)	▼	▼	▼
Student Government	▼	▼	▼
Recreational Opportunities (class trips, campus events)	▼	▼	▼
General Student Life Opportunities (volunteering/community service, TRIO, service-based learning)	▼	▼	▼
Student Government	▼	▼	▼
Student Employment	▼	▼	▼
Student Housing	▼	▼	▼
Academic Support (tutoring, writing/math support, research support)	▼	▼	▼
Internships or other work-based learning	▼	▼	▼
Library Services	▼	▼	▼
Employment services (job fairs, career counseling, etc.)	▼	▼	▼

Possible answers for Accessed:

- Available
- Not Available
- Not Available but would use/like if it were

Dropdown Options for Reason:

- Not available
- No interest
- Not enough time

- Not allowed
- Too many other responsibilities
- Other

If you requested ADA accommodations from your school for a learning disability, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements about your experience.

	Very true	Somewhat True	Not True	Does Not Apply
I was informed about the ADA process prior to starting school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to get appropriate documentation to support my request.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reapplying for accommodations in later terms was easy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The educational institution helped me through the process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My local facility helped make sure that approved academic accommodations were made available to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For the following questions, please rate your level of agreement using the scale below. Select the number that best matches your experience (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree), 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). There are no right or wrong answers. Your feedback will help us understand your experience in the PEP program and improve it for future students.

	1	2	3	4	5
The PEP program content was relevant to my educational and career goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program helped me build new skills and knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was challenged to think critically and apply what I learned.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instructors treated me with respect and supported my learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program provided clear expectations and guidance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program gave me access to the resources I needed (books, technology, materials).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had enough time and opportunity to engage with the coursework.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participation in PEP increased my confidence in my academic abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program helped me prepare for future education or employment opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the skills I gained will be useful in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please tell us the modalities of courses are available at your facility and whether you prefer to take courses in the available modalities.

	Modality Available	Do you like taking courses in this modality?
In Person at Facility	<input type="checkbox"/>	▼
Asynchronous Online (no live classes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	▼
Synchronous Online (live video-conference)	<input type="checkbox"/>	▼
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	▼
In Person on Campus	<input type="checkbox"/>	▼

Dropdown options for “Do you like taking courses in this modality?”

- Yes
- No
- No Preference
- N/A - I have not tried taking a course in this manner
- N/A – I have not been able to take a course in this manner because it is not offered

For the following questions, please rate your level of agreement using the scale below. Select the number that best matches your experience (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree), 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). There are no right or wrong answers. Your feedback will help us understand your experience in the PEP program and improve it for future students.

	1	2	3	4	5
The PEP program content was relevant to my educational and career goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program helped me build new skills and knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was challenged to think critically and apply what I learned.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instructors treated me with respect and supported my learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program provided clear expectations and guidance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program gave me access to the resources I needed (books, technology, materials).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had enough time and opportunity to engage with the coursework.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participation in PEP increased my confidence in my academic abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The program helped me prepare for future education or employment opportunities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe the skills I gained will be useful in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Recognizing that incarcerated students with assigned laptops will still run into slow-downs and barriers when accessing the internet, do you feel that you have the technological tools to be academically successful?

Yes

No

Do you believe that your experience in the PEP program has or will prepare you to continue your education if you wish to do so? Please explain.

Please briefly describe the steps a student with a disability should take in order to request academic accommodations.

Does your academic institution provide specialized reentry case management services to PEP participants?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Select any reentry support that you are aware is provided to releasing students by their academic institution.

- Cell Phone
- Laptop
- Gift Cards
- Scholarships
- Hygiene or other physical supplies
- Other

Please type another opt

How could the academic institution and the Maine Department of Corrections improve your student experience?

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About Your Post-Release Experience

The questions below ask you to consider your experience with the academic institution for which you are filling out this survey **post-release**.

Have you continued your education with this institution?

- Yes
- I have not yet continued but plan to in the future.
- I did not continue in this program and do not plan to return it

Great! Please describe the supports and any challenges that arose as you transitioned to being community-based student.

Have you continued your education with this institution?

- Yes
- I have not yet continued but plan to in the future.
- I did not continue in this program and do not plan to return it

It's great that you want to continue your education. Tell us why you've not yet returned to school (e.g. timing, cost, financial aid, difficulty with enrollment process, family challenges).

Have you continued your education with this institution?

- Yes
- I have not yet continued but plan to in the future.
- I did not continue in this program and do not plan to return it

Tell us about why you don't plan to obtain your credential (e.g. lack of interest, too busy, not enough support, process is too difficult, don't see value in credential, too many instability factors in your life presently).

Have you changed your major since your release?

Yes

No

Briefly explain why you have changed your major.

How many 3-credit courses do you typically take per semester?

Please Select

Please Select

1

2

3

4

5

More than 5

Course Type



How do you take your courses?

	Course Type
Asynchronous Online (no live classes)	▼
Synchronous Online (live video-conference)	▼
In Person on Campus	▼

If you wish to take in-person classes on your campus, are you allowed?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure / I have not tried or wanted to attend in person

In order to take in-person classes at your campus or to continue your education with this institution, did you have to go through any sort of review process? Examples include meeting with a staff person to discuss expectations, risk reviews, etc.

- Yes
- No

If you wish to take in-person classes on your campus, are you allowed?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure / I have not tried or wanted to attend in person

In order to take in-person classes at your campus or to continue your education with this institution, did you have to go through any sort of review process? Examples include meeting with a staff person to discuss expectations, risk reviews, etc.

- Yes
- No

Please tell us about your experience with that process, including about whether you had to provide documentation of or discuss your conviction record.

If you faced any challenges when transitioning from the PEP program to community-based education, please briefly describe.

Have you been to a campus location post release?

Yes

No

Briefly explain why you have or have not visited a campus in person.

Did you feel welcome on the campus?

Yes

No

Other

Briefly explain why your answer regarding whether you felt welcome on campus.

Have you tried to transfer credits earned with this academic institution to another academic institution?

- Yes
- No

Please tell us about the credit transfer experience. We are interested to know if the credits transferred as expected and whether you faced any challenges in having the other school accept your earned credits. If there were challenges, please explain what happened.

Are there any affinity, advocacy, dedicated spaces for, or student life groups for individuals with criminal legal records?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure
- The institution is currently developing services for this population

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Please briefly describe the steps a student with a disability should take in order to request academic accommodations.

Does your academic institution provide specialized reentry case management services to PEP participants?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Select any reentry support that you are aware is provided to releasing students by their academic institution.

- Cell Phone
- Laptop
- Gift Cards
- Scholarships
- Hygiene or other physical supplies
- Other

How could the academic institution and the Maine Department of Corrections improve your student experience?

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Next

General Feedback

Please provide us any final feedback about the PEP program, the academic institution, and actions that could be taken to better support students.

Please explain whether and how the credits, skills, or knowledge you gained through the education you received with this institution will help you in the future.

If you have any additional feedback, please provide below.

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Submit