



Prison Education: Writing a Transformative Story

The Rappahannock Community College
Haynesville Correctional Center
Educational Program



Rappahannock
Community College

Christopher Shivers asked to be transferred to Haynesville Correctional Center because it was in his home community, and he wanted to help start a dog training program there. When Shivers learned about the opportunity to earn an associate degree through Rappahannock Community College (RCC) while at Haynesville, he was excited to join the next learning cohort. Despite a noisy environment and keeping up with the demands of his prison job, Shivers felt motivated and encouraged by his instructors.

“It was challenging, but it prepared me for the real world,” Shivers said. “Without education you’re doomed ... It gave me the chance to redeem the opportunity I lost as a youth.”



The RCC degree focuses on helping incarcerated students become entrepreneurs upon release, because often employment is difficult to find. Shivers was released on Feb. 18, 2020. Today, at age 36, he works full time while building a dog-training business. “It’s not work to me, because it’s something I love to do.”

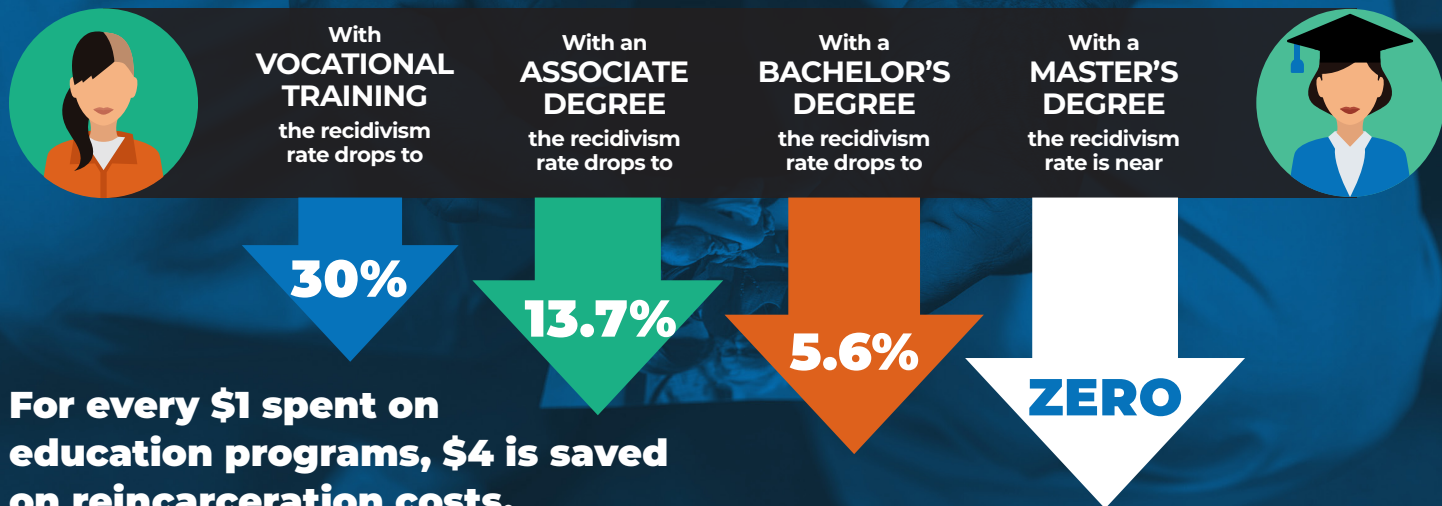
The RCC Haynesville Educational Program is transformative. Students develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of themselves and the community around them, preparing them for a productive life outside of prison. Beyond the students, the prison education program impacts their families and society with a significant reduction in recidivism, breaking the cycle of generational poverty and incarceration. Prison education reduces crime and saves public dollars.

The RCC Haynesville Correctional Center Educational Program, in operation for almost 15 years, is supported through a range of federal and philanthropic resources. Long-term sustainability for this initiative is dependent on continued private charitable support and thoughtful philanthropists who truly understand the transformative power of education.

Prison Education is a Smart Investment

- Unlike the up to 68% of men and women who will likely return to prison within three years of their release, Haynesville students will use their RCC degrees to start a business or get a job. While recidivism overall falls by 43% with any kind of educational opportunities in prison, research shows that the higher the degree earned in prison, the lower the recidivism rate.
- Every year, more than 700,000 state and federal prisoners re-enter their communities; 94% of those incarcerated in federal and state prisons will one day be released. They

When Inmates Participate In Educational Programs, the RECIDIVISM Rate Drops Significantly.



Source: The Bureau of Justice Statistics

have a high chance of returning to prison if released with no more skills or abilities than when arrested, (note that 36% of those in state prisons have attained less than a high school education) More than 60 percent of all formerly incarcerated people in the nation are still unemployed one year after release.

“When you look at the overall mission of community college, it’s to bring education closer to the people....When we talk about serving students, we are serving everybody”

—Dr. Matthew Brent, history faculty

TWO BOLD GOALS

- Prepare students for a new productive pathway
- Reduce recidivism and generational incarceration

How does the program work?

Classes are provided through a cohort model where students take classes and study together four evenings a week, graduating with an associate degree in arts and science in as little as six semesters.

HCC students are offered a quality education experience that is equal to that of traditional students. Faculty find motivated students hungry to learn and ready to feed their minds. The vital and indispensable piece to this learning model is the program coordinator

who helps students navigate college within prison. A voice for the students, the RCC Program Director provides college and career advising, serves as a liaison between students, prison administrators and faculty, supports financial aid applications, and provides learning resources to students given the significant limits on technology use.

The program has grown exponentially between 2018 and 2020: from 18 to 50 students enrolled at a time. To date, RCC has awarded a total of 36 associate degrees and 16 certificates with more than 120 student participants. Learn more by visiting www.rappahannock.edu/prison-education

Why Your Support is Critical

There are many diverse views on higher education in prison, but no one can deny how transformational education is — for the individual, their families and communities. The RCC Haynesville students are some of the most highly successful and motivated students. On their difficult journey to RCC, many have felt forgotten, but in their classes they are seen, heard and valued.

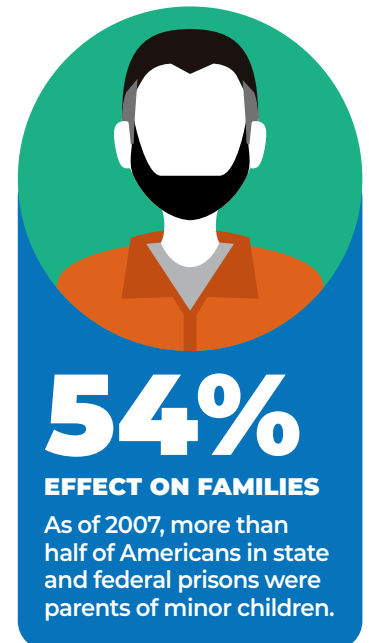
While most students' costs are now supported through the federal Pell grant, the leadership and coordination of the program has long been supported through a grant from the Laughing Gull Foundation, a leader in higher education in prison. As Laughing Gull looks to build partnerships in other communities and colleges, RCC must raise local support for long-term sustainability of this critical program. **Join us as we advance educational opportunities for all students thirsty for knowledge.**

Join Us

For more information, contact Barbara Schaab, RCC Haynesville Program Director, at 804-333-6739 or email bschaab@rappahannock.edu.



Source: Society for Human Resource Management, "Background Checking—The Use of Criminal Background Checks in Hiring Decisions" (2012).



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008), available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING GOAL
\$75,000