



Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor

## STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

### OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER



Scott Semple  
Commissioner

October 2, 2015

Mr. Warren Farr  
U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid  
830 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Farr:

I am writing as the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Correction (CT DOC) to give full support and the highest endorsement on behalf of the Board of Regents for Higher Education for Connecticut State Colleges and Universities letter of application for consideration and selection as a **Second Chance Pell Pilot Program Initiative Experimental Site**.

As a state-operated correctional system of 15 jails and prisons, which include the York Correctional Institution for females and Manson Youth Institution for males under the age of 21, the CT DOC is responsible for more than 16,000 inmates. In addition, CT DOC Parole and Community Services supervises 3,900 offenders in communities across the state.

The opportunity for the CT DOC to join with the state's community college and university system will help our inmate population obtain education and training that prepares them to obtain employment in high demand occupations when they leave prison. Connecticut's participation as an experiment site is in direct alignment with Governor Dannel Malloy's Second Chance Society Initiative, which is giving offenders a second chance to turn their lives around, in part by obtaining education and training to become gainfully employed once they are released. In addition, as a Department of Justice *2015 Second Chance Act Statewide Adult Recidivism Reduction Strategic Planning Program* grantee, I look forward to receiving input from my colleagues in higher education as the CT DOC with other state agencies and judicial branch work during the next 12-months developing a plan to implement comprehensive strategies that address the challenges posed by reentry and recidivism reduction.

The CT DOC has an extensive history partnering with Connecticut's Community Colleges providing postsecondary educational opportunities to the benefit our inmate population. CT DOC's Unified School District 1 has worked with multiple community colleges to provide college level courses and long-distance learning once paid for with federal funds from a Youthful Offender grant that is no longer available, and using limited state funds. Due to the State's budget challenges, the CT DOC is presently unable to finance college-level courses and training without shifting the cost to inmate, which is unfeasible when most of our population lack the means to pay for their education while in prison.

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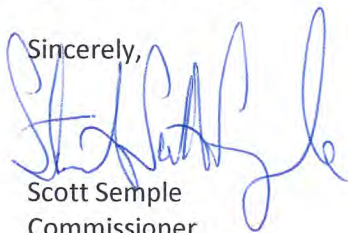
The opportunity that is being offered by the U.S. Department of Education for eligible incarcerated individuals to receive Federal Pell grants will provide necessary financial assistance directly to those qualified individuals in our correctional system to attend college, while they are incarcerated.

There is tremendous **Value** to consider in the Board of Regents application – both in the **Affordability** and in the **Network** of the state’s Community Colleges. Federal Pell grants more than adequately covers the cost to obtain an education from a community college. Hence, a greater number of inmates will be able to enroll as students, and then to continue his or her education in the community, either at the same college or transfer to another community college closer to where the person plans to live after leaving prison. By taking a coordinated approach, we will be helping to ensure that ex-offenders remain engaged and continue their education post-release toward their quest to obtain employment, housing, and pro-social affiliations that keep them on a positive track and less likely to recidivate and be re-incarcerated.

My staff has worked closely with the administrators and educators at the Board of Regents and Community Colleges assisting with the preparation of their letter of application. We are committed to working with each of the colleges to identify eligible individuals, assist filling out financial aid (FAFSA) packet, coordinate logistics, arrange for instructional space, address barriers or problems that may arise within correctional facilities, and offer other assistance that ensures students and experimental success.

We look forward not only to partnering with Connecticut’s Board of Regents, but collaborating with the United States Department of Education to put higher education and training within reach for this population. Thank you for considering the Board of Regents application and the opportunity to advance to round two of the application process.

Sincerely,



Scott Semple  
Commissioner