Why do I teach for the FEPPS program?
The answer is the students. In my time at the prison, I have taught the range of English classes, from the preparatory levels through English 101 and English 102. I have watched students become stimulated by new thinking, new subjects and new information. In addition, it is heartening to see that, as the idea of education grows on them, many gravitate to new peer groups, allying with those who are also following the college pathway.

My favorite example of the transformative power of education in prison is a young woman I first met in English 085. Faced with the enormous challenge of attending college for the first time, she pursued

Theoretically, society’s highest hope for prisoners is that we learn our lesson. Fortunately, college education offers more than a mere lesson; it offers a way to learn about how the world works and how someone like me can fit into it. From the very beginning, when we were just a collection of potential academic collaborators, the ideas and viewpoint of students were considered valuable and essential to FEPPS. We didn’t have to limit our voices to the traditional thinking; our experiences, no matter how far outside the norm, were considered valid and actually a part of what is necessary to make the needed changes in the world of academia, of corrections, and of the greater community.

The experience inside the classroom is one of magic, not in the sleight of hand way, but in the way of the inexplicable and awesome. In the classroom, prisoners are remade into students and students into citizens. I learned not only how to think critically but also how to think about my

Margaret Whitemore taught her ninth FEPPS class, English 101, at WCCW this spring. Margaret goes out of her way each term to keep the content of her classes relevant and current. We appreciate the countless hours she has put towards student success and mentorship. Thank you Margaret for being a part of our community!

Tonya Wilson recently graduated with her Associate’s Degree along with 18 other graduates at our ceremony in June. Tonya graduated with high honors and is the FEPPS’ class of 2017 valedictorian. Tonya is a founding student of the FEPPS program and volunteers on the FEPPS’ Education Advisory Council.

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At our June graduation, our valedictorian told fellow students, “Many of us have had narrow ideas of what is possible. When we refuse to be inadequate transformation happens. Education is that transformation and it can’t be undone.”

Our students are living proof that we must think expansively about what is possible. One of our alumni will attend Columbia University this fall. Another is running her own business and traveling the country. A recent graduate is working on a dual career of college and becoming a graphic artist. Another alum just graduated from the University of Washington and plans to attend law school.

Our mission is to make an excellent college education accessible to women, but it is more than that. We fundamentally believe that women in prison are capable, intelligent, and deserve dignity. In his book, Just Mercy, Bryan Stevenson says, “Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.” Expanding the public’s idea of what is possible for women in prison, as our valedictorian said, is at the core of what we do. Thank you for believing in our students and in the power of education.

With hope and gratitude,
Tanya

Her writing with a single-minded focus. She set up her own plan to expand her vocabulary by setting herself a goal of learning several new words each day and then testing herself weekly. She also began reading outside of classroom assignments. Now she is on her own road to educational success and serves as an important mentor to those women coming along behind her.

I continue to teach at WCCW because I love these students, I learn from them, and I know through the transformative power of education, I can help them change their lives. In fact, my teaching at the prison has been far and away the most enriching experience of my life.
GRADUATE HIGHLIGHT
Continued from Page 1

to think critically but also how to think about my potential position in the world as an individual who has agency. I honed skills I didn’t know that it was possible to gain after making so many mistakes. And throughout the process, I knew that I was held to a standard of which society had deemed me incapable of attaining, but that my professors expected from me as a matter of course. Hot button topics like race, gender and religion could bring discomfort and tension to the classroom, but we powered through them with candor and the desire to know and understand. And, we would all come out the other side more connected to each other and committed to preserving such a precious process.

Although we have experienced all kinds of resistance, we never let that stop us. As students, we realized that the only way to advance our education is to advance what it means to be a part of a robust academic program within a carceral setting. Today, my goal is to be the teacher, and the student, formally and of the world. FEPPS allowed that to happen.

CONGRATULATIONS

THEY DID IT!

On June 13, 2017 we saw 19 of our students graduate with an Associate’s Degree. With a number of moving speeches, including those from Keynote Speaker Cheryl Wilkins from the Columbia University Center for Justice and from Class of 2017 Valedictorian Tonya Wilson, the 2017 Graduation was a beautiful, emotional event. We are excited to see more and more of our students continue to graduate with their Associates degrees, and we are so proud of our recent graduates.

I felt most challenged by my own self-doubt. I never thought I would be in college and then I realized I was made for college, getting over my own fears was challenging. I had to realize that I was worth an education and that I would be severely limited without one.

- Felicia ‘17

I’ve gained true self-respect and know now that I do have a voice and people do care. I know through education, we can heal and become strong women for our community.

- Gail ‘17

Education helped me heal and get through the process of that shame, those feelings that we often stuff and put away, when dealing with crime issues. Education has given me the opportunity to relook at myself and to redefine myself as the person that I know that I am designed to be.

- Marriam ‘17
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Erica Sanford
The artists at Washington Corrections Center for Women

A special thank you to our Board of Directors, gala committee, volunteers, staff, and, most importantly, attendees who made this event such a success!
Welcome, Carsen!

Hello everyone! My name is Carsen and I am thrilled to join the FEPPS’ staff as their first Volunteer Coordinator. For the past three years, I served as a study hall facilitator for FEPPS at WCCW and I look forward to continuing my work with both new and seasoned study hall volunteers. My goal is to expand our volunteer opportunities at the prison and at our Seattle and Tacoma offices and I invite you to reach out if you are interested in helping or learning more!

A little about me; I am passionate about educational equity and believe that increased access to higher education can be incredibly empowering and transformative. In my free time, I love to play music, rock climb, and get outside. I’m looking forward to meeting more of the FEPPS’ community!

Graduating to Greatness Gala

June was quite a busy time for FEPPS. We kicked the month off with our first Graduating to Greatness Annual Gala, which was quite a success! We had a packed house at the Pacific Tower overlooking downtown Seattle and the Sound. Thanks to the generosity of our guests, donors, and sponsors, we raised over $52,000 to support our students in earning their college degrees.

SUMMER CLASSES AT WCCW

- English 102
- Communications 110
- College Prep Math II
- Sociology 201
- PE 100
- Economics 201
- Biology 175
LOOK INSIDE TO MEET OUR GRADS!

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NEWSLETTER
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