WHAT’S INSIDE: BA DEGREE, INNOVATIVE EXTRACURRICULARS & PARTNERSHIPS

If you follow us on social media you’ve heard the news - the University of Puget Sound will accredit a Bachelor of Arts degree for FEPPS students in 2020! Read more about the accreditation process and curriculum inside.

For the first time, FEPPS has created three new staff positions for students at the prison. We are so grateful for their insights and hustle and are happy to introduce them here!

In addition to classes, FEPPS students and volunteers co-facilitate numerous extracurricular activities. Read about a few of them here.

FEPPS has been racking up airline miles! This fall we have attended the National Conference on Higher Education in Prison (NCHEP) in St. Louis and traveled to Ann Arbor for a project with JSTOR Labs to bring an academic journal database into the prison.

YEAR END APPEAL: SUPPORT OUR RE-ENTRY EFFORTS

We are so proud of the strides we made in 2019 towards providing robust academic support to students as they release from prison. Last February, Morgan Denton was hired as our first Pathways Program Manager. This year...

- 32 students served by the Pathways Program
- 12 students applied to college
- 13 students submitted financial aid applications
- 4 students accepted to the University of Washington
- 11 students enrolled in college or finished their degree

The Pathways Program is essential to ensuring our students are supported in their educational goals before and after leaving prison. This program is funded by a grant from the Murdock Foundation, and as part of next years’ grant agreement, **we need to raise $25,000** in matching funds. A generous donor has already pledged $5,000, **can you help us raise the rest?**

Donate at www.fepps.org/donate or using the slip included in this newsletter!

FEPPS Clerk and graduate Synae was accepted to UW Seattle in November. She will begin classes in Spring 2020.
FEPPS’ BACHELOR’S DEGREE IS HERE!

On Friday, October 11 the Board of Trustees for the University of Puget Sound unanimously voted to approve accreditation of a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies, to be offered by FEPPS at the Washington Corrections Center for Women. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded Puget Sound a four-year $1 million grant to support the FEPPS academic program and the development of the bachelor’s degree program.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the seventh BA program offered in a women’s prison nationally, and the first BA program in a prison in Washington State. Since 2016, 45 students have received an AA degree through FEPPS, and many of these graduates are still incarcerated. A BA program at the prison is a long-awaited chance to reach their next educational goals. We can’t wait to see them soar!

We are immensely grateful for the hard work of many faculty and staff at Puget Sound who helped make this happen, especially the tireless leadership of FEPPS Faculty Director Tanya Erzen, and for the support of Puget Sound President Isiaah Crawford and the Trustees. And of course, none of this could have happened without the tireless advocacy of our students themselves.

“Freedom Education Project Puget Sound is one of our signature programs, and we are thrilled to be able to more fully invest in this program that leverages both our role as an intellectual asset in our community and as an agent of social change,” said Isiaah Crawford, president of University of Puget Sound.

So what does a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies actually look like? Here’s a peak at the curriculum. (Remember, all of our students are beginning this degree program having already completed an AA):

• Two courses in the Social Sciences
• Two courses in the Humanities
• Two courses in the Natural Sciences or Mathematics
• Two additional courses in one of the above areas
• Students will also complete a Capstone Project - this will consist of defining an emphasis for their degree and conducting a major research project rooted in this theme.
FEPPS is thrilled to be working with three of our graduates in newly created Clerk and Teaching Assistant roles. After years of advocacy, this is the first time we’ve been able to hire staff dedicated to FEPPS from among our student body at the prison. All graduates and founders of the program, these staff members support with a wide variety of administrative tasks at the prison, including class sign ups, library book-keeping, and publicizing events, in addition to TA-ing classes, supporting study hall, and mentoring their fellow students. It’s difficult to overstate the impact of their wisdom and efforts on the growth and sustainability of our program!

**LISA KANAMU** is a graduate of the FEPPS Class of 2018 where she earned an AA in Liberal Arts. She is currently the FEPPS English Teaching Assistant, the first for the program. Lisa has been a part of the FEPPS program since its inception, continues to take classes, and plans to apply for FEPPS’ BA program. In addition to FEPPS, Lisa has been a Toastmaster for 12 years and is actively pursuing her DTM (Distinguished Toast Master), is a lead administrator for the Relay for Life fundraising event at WCCW, is a part of the FEPPS Ethics Bowl team, is co-lead for the Black Prisoners Caucus education committee, and is a Tier Rep, or liaison, between the incarcerated population and WCCW staff. Lisa is also a certified Service Dog Trainer who is passionate about education whether you have two legs or four.

**SYNAE MCMILLON-COOPER** is currently a FEPPS Clerk at WCCW. She was a part of the second generation of the Women’s Village, serving as a clerk, general council member, and facilitator in various self-help workshops. As a member of the Women’s Village she helped to promote the need for quality education for women on the inside. Synae has been a dedicated student and leader in the FEPPS program since its inception in 2011. She graduated in 2017 with High Honors. Synae also serves on the FEPPS Advisory Council, wanting to use all of her experiences in her educational journey to help improve the FEPPS program for her peers inside. She is passionate about helping and informing others on how to recognize their ability to transform through education. Recently, she has taken the lead in starting the first ever literary Journal: *Untapp’d* out of WCCW to provide a space for all to visibly reveal suppressed feelings, potentials and ideas. Synae is currently preparing to release in 2020 and will attend the University of Washington in Seattle to pursue her Bachelors in Journalism.

**CANDIS RUSH** is currently one of the two first clerks for FEPPS. She was one of the many students that was taking classes through FEPPS in 2012 before the program was accredited in 2014. In 2017 she graduated with an AA from the FEPPS program and has been a member of the FEPPS Advisory Council since 2016. Candis continues to take classes through FEPPS and has accrued 140 credits. She assists in the student onboarding outreach, tutoring, mentoring, inside teacher training, and support staff for the *Untapp’d* literary journal. She is excited to apply for the FEPPS BA program in 2020. She has a passion for business/management and is going to pursue a MBA in Finance. Candis also serves as a member and the President of the Black Prisoners’ Caucus (B.P.C) where she continues to lead marginalized groups of women in establishing purpose, literacy, and self-determination.

**UPCOMING COURSES: WHAT STUDENTS CAN TAKE SPRING 2020**

We can’t wait to bring on new teachers and new subjects in 2020 - here’s what we’re offering next:

- **English Prep II** - the new cohort will continue to study with veteran instructors Mary DeWine and Blaine Hunt
- **Math Prep I** - we’re debuting a new math prep curriculum, incorporating what we’ve learned from past cohorts
- **Human Biology** - students who took Survey of Biology are excited to dig deeper into human physiology
- **American Government and Politics** - a favorite class of many students
- **German** - this is our first time teaching German! Students are so excited, including many graduates
- **American History: The 1960s** - let’s get groovy!
- **Yoga** - we always love partnering with our friends at Yoga Behind Bars to offer this PE class
For the past year volunteer Logan Lyles-Miller has facilitated a monthly film series open to all at WCCW. We asked Logan to give us a window into a recent screening and the discussion that followed.

“We have just passed the one-year anniversary of the FEPPS Film Series and we have been covering a lot of ground. Recently, participants watched and discussed the 2017 documentary film *Bisbee ’17*, which reflects on a mass deportation of 1200 immigrant miners in the old mining town of Bisbee, Arizona in 1917. As the present-day residents collaborate to stage recreations of the event, their internal biases, racism, and willingness to ignore the violent truth about their town’s past is exposed.

Our collective experience while screening this film was emotional. The visceral nature of the subject matter involved was so much that we decided to pause the movie halfway through to address the palpable unease. We took a moment to give voice to the gravity and life-endangering consequences that result from the attitudes expressed by many of the townspeople.

After the film, many of the students expressed their disbelief that a town could be so intentionally ignorant about the extreme violence perpetrated by the mining company and deputized citizens onto the primarily non-white miners. Students discussed their understanding of the many instances in American history where laws are twisted and suspended in order to “justify” and condone violence against black and brown bodies. Students acknowledged that when marginalized communities and communities of color speak out against these systems of oppression, they are most often met with violence.

We then shifted our focus to current times, and discussed the overwhelming similarities between the 1917 Bisbee Deportation and the current ICE raids and forced deportations that are happening all over the U.S. We acknowledged that only a few miles from WCCW, the Northwest Detention Center functions in many of the same ways the Bisbee police did: twisting and suspending laws in order to “justify” violence against black and brown bodies. Despite the weight of these realities, we left the Film Series acknowledging that intentional dialogue and the naming of these structural injustices is necessary work in order to undo these systems of violence.”

This term, the film series has focused on biographical documentaries that center music and dance, such as:
On November 16, FEPPS’ Ethics Bowl team made their debut into formal competition by participating in the Northwest Regional Ethics Bowl. Connected by video, Team FEPPS competed against teams from other colleges, including the national champions from Whitworth. Even through they did not make it to the finals, it was an invaluable learning experience to interact with other teams and watch the final rounds.

Here are some of the topics that were covered -
• Censoring hate/offensive speech on social media
• Religious exemptions for mandatory vaccinations
• Allowing girls to join the Boy Scouts of America
• Using open-sourced, but not FDA-approved, software to modify insulin pumps
• China’s social credit system
• “Call-out” culture

Thanks to coach Paul Tubig and WCCW employee Brie Schafer who volunteered her Saturday to operate the video equipment. We’ll be back next year!

Members of the FEPPS staff and faculty spent a long weekend in St. Louis last month, attending the ninth annual National Conference on Higher Education in Prison. We are grateful for illuminating conversations around equity, pedagogy and best practices, and proud of the FEPPS community members who presented.

• FEPPS professor Laurel Rayburn and graduate Alyssa Knight submitted a paper they co-wrote, Lose Your Voice: Toward a Theory of Writing Pedagogy for Higher Ed in Prison. We are glad Alyssa was able to call in!
• Laura Taylor has taught several natural science courses for FEPPS, including our first Organic Chemistry class. She traveled all the way from her new home in the Northern Marianas Islands for a workshop entitled Designing Laboratory Science Courses for High Security Facilities. We are hopeful that sharing our experience will help more programs expand their lab science offerings.
• Faculty Director Tanya Erzen co-presented a panel on Applying and Succeeding in Graduate School and on her report Equity and Excellence in Practice: A Guide for Higher Education in Prison with her co-authors.

In October, FEPPS Administrative Coordinator Elizabeth Stensrud and University of Puget Sound Librarian Ben Tucker travelled to Ann Arbor to attend a meeting with JSTOR Labs. JSTOR is a database of academic journals, books and primary sources, and is piloting a project to make an offline version of these materials available to incarcerated students.

Elizabeth, Ben and representatives from other college-in-prison programs across the country worked with JSTOR to give input on priorities, technological barriers, and product design. We are so excited about this collaboration and the potential to closely approximate the research resources of students on traditional campuses.
Riding the momentum of an incredible creative writing course last spring, FEPPS students and faculty have begun a literary journal at WCCW: Untapp’d. Untapp’d’s mission is to foster a spirit of community through the celebration of diverse voices in the prison, and to encourage positive expressions of individual creativity. The journal seeks to create a space that unites people across their differences through their art. Additionally, members of the editorial staff will develop leadership skills and hone communication skills as they publicize the journal, ask for submissions, meet to discuss work, and to produce the journal itself.

Untapp’d will be published bi-annually and will feature poetry, fiction, essays and art by people incarcerated at WCCW, including people who are not FEPPS students. We cannot wait to share their work with you!