

February 15, 2023

In 1995, New York banned incarcerated people from accessing its Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). In her January 5, 2022 State of the State address, New York Governor Kathy Hochul pledged to “restore the Tuition Assistance Program for incarcerated people,” and **Part F** of the New York State 2023 Enacted Budget repealed the TAP ban, effective immediately. Both the Senate and Assembly also included TAP restoration in their one-house budgets, S4464 (Jackson) and A2322 (Aubry).

In October of 2022, the Higher Services Education Commission (HESC) made the 2022-23 Tuition Assistance Program Application for Incarcerated Students (TAP-IS) available to college-in-prison programs across New York. The application must be completed by or on behalf of all incarcerated individuals who have been accepted into a higher education program.

BPI began distributing the TAP-IS application to students ahead of the 2023 Spring Semester across the seven New York State prisons in which it operates. Currently, BPI enrolls 305 students statewide. **To date, BPI has collected 148 TAP-IS applications.** Being that BPI is a Second Chance Pell Site with nearly 100% of eligible students completing that application, the college expects about 204 students will also complete the TAP-IS application over the course of the current semester. It is important to understand that the collection timeframe for completed applications varies from facility to facility with respect to processing materials in and out of each prison and from student to student depending on whether or not they have the requisite information at hand. BPI has put systems and resources in place to support students in the completion of their application.

Not all incarcerated students who apply for TAP will be eligible for an award nor are all BPI students eligible. In general, a number of students will not qualify due their loan default status, immigration status, or having failed to meet course requirements. Nonetheless, all BPI students are enrolled in degree granting programs and tend to take 3 or more courses each semester, meaning most that qualify will receive a full-time award. The college will be able to fully assess how many students will meet the criteria for full-time versus part-time awards until the semester ends.

The most current count of incarcerated students in New York State from DOCCS is 1377 students attending college while incarcerated across the state.

Based on BPI’s experience with TAP applications thus far, we estimate that HESC might expect to at least receive roughly 700 TAP-IS applications in this first year. Also, while some programs in the state will not yet have started the application process, others will have close to 100% completion with TAP as a requirement for enrollment. BPI does not exclude students from access to its programs based upon their eligibility to receive TAP and/or Pell.