

MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Supporting Justice Involved Students

September 2026 | Board of Regents

Where We're Headed Today

- 01** **Background Information**
- 02** **MSUB and Prison Education Programming**
- 03** **Highlands College & Butte Prerelease Pilot**
- 04** **Goals & Next Steps**

Second Chance Pell: A Brief Timeline

2015

2021

2022

2023

2026

U.S. Department of Education launches the Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative (SCP)

Montana selected as a partner site (Cohort 3), making incarcerated students at select institutions eligible for Pell Grants

Four Montana institutions now deliver postsecondary programming across four correctional facilities

Pell Restoration Occurs – opens the pathway for Prison Education Programming

MSUB becomes a Prison Education Program

Montana's Four Second Chance Pell Pilot Sites



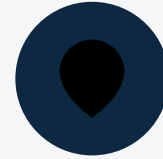
**Dawson Community
College**

Montana Women's Prison



**Montana State University
Billings**

Montana Women's Prison /
Montana State Prison



Great Falls College

Shelby Correctional Facility

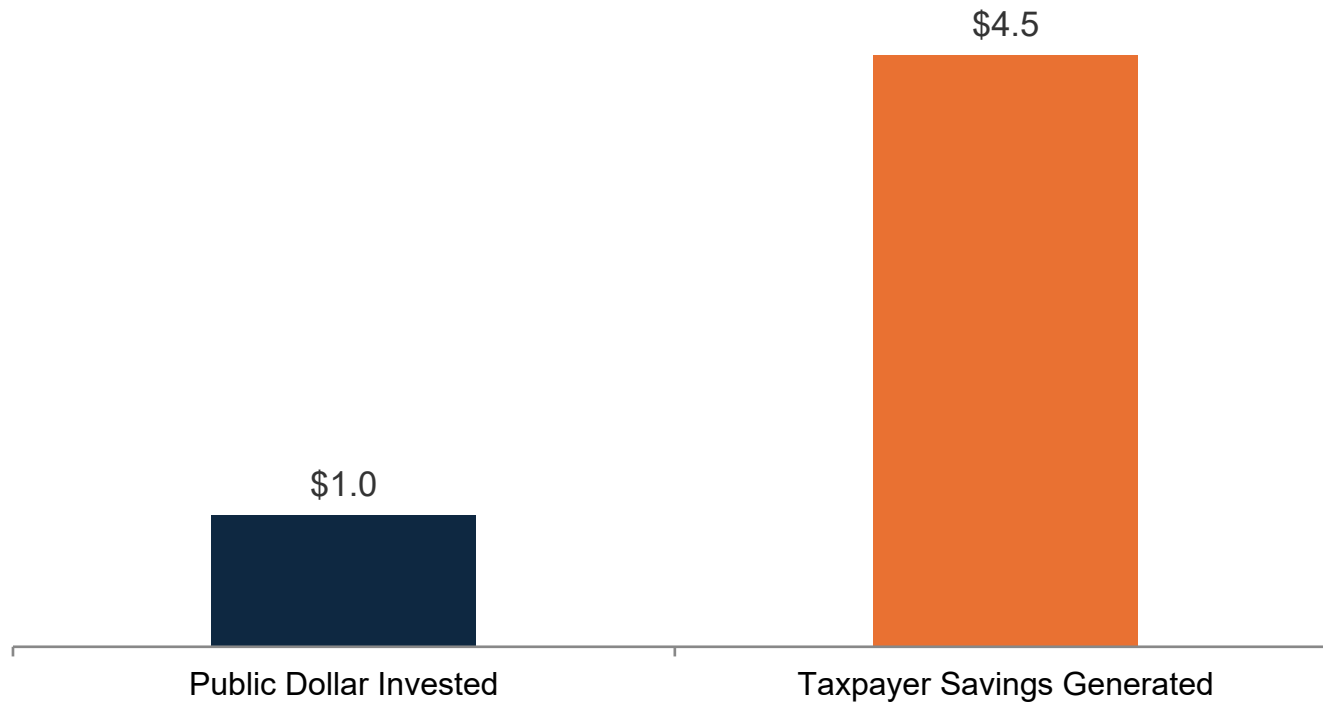


Helena College

Montana State Prison

A High-Return Investment

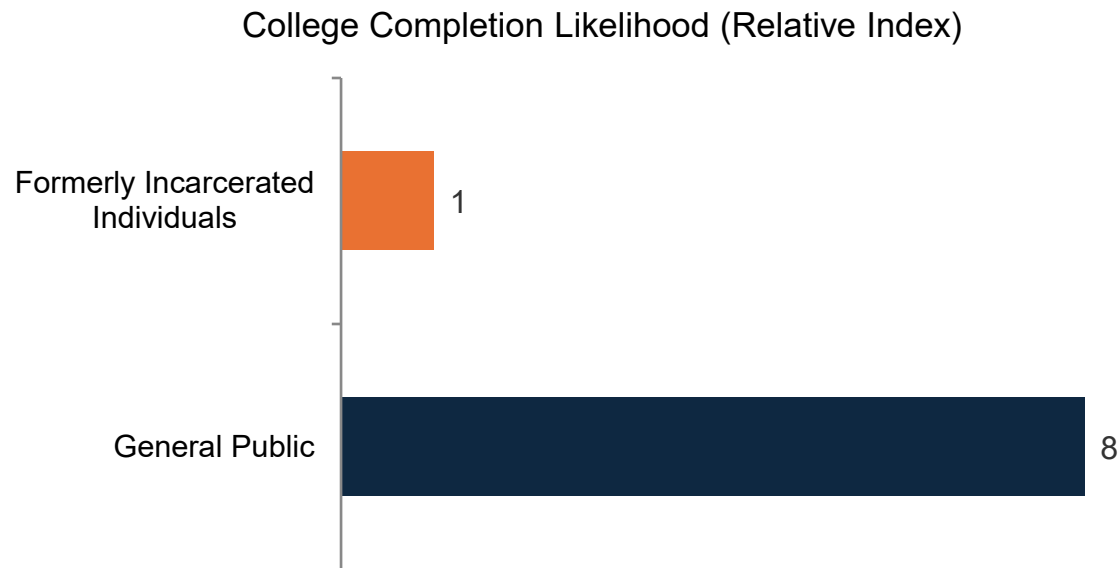
Return on \$1 Invested in Prison Education



Every dollar invested in prison education yields **more than \$4–\$5** in taxpayer savings from reduced recidivism.

The Real Gap Is Access — Not Completion

The real story isn't that formerly incarcerated students underperform once enrolled — it's that **almost none of them get the chance to enroll at all.**



8x

less likely to complete college than the general public

<5%

of formerly incarcerated people ever graduate from college

WHY THIS WORK IS CENTRAL

This is the MUS mission, applied to who needs it most

Access

Justice-involved Montanans face the steepest version of every barrier MUS already exists to address.

Community & safety

Every completion is a documented reduction in the odds of returning to custody — a direct return on public investment.

Workforce

Stable employment is one of the strongest predictors of predictors of successful reentry — and MUS exists to build to build workforce readiness.

Second chances

Belief that people can change through education is close to close to the founding premise of higher education itself.

TODAY'S PANEL CONVERSATION

MSUB

Where we are now

Current degree and non-credit structures inside MSP and MWP, and MSUB's official provider designation.



Highlands

What's next

The Pre-Release Pilot launching at Highlands in spring 2027 — building a credential-focused, future-facing structure.



Montana DOC

Goals & lessons learned

An overview of past and future goals. Where can our agencies best collaborate? What is needed to meet our goals of the future?



MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY BILLINGS

Dr. Nicole Bogunovich

PEP Faculty Liaison



Degree-granting education, inside

What MSUB currently delivers for credit at Montana State Prison (MSP) and Montana Women's Prison (MWP)

Montana State Prison (MSP)

- Associate of Applied Science in Business
- Online Delivery – with Office Hours
- Bachelor of Science in Liberal Studies
- Hybrid Delivery

Montana Women's Prison (MWP)

- Associate of Applied Science in Business
- Online Delivery – with Office Hours
- Bachelor of Science in Liberal Studies
- Hybrid Delivery



Non-credit offerings, inside

Workforce, life-skills, and enrichment programming outside a degree path

Montana Women's Prison (MWP)

- Welding Programming
 - Great Falls College welding trailer
 - 5 week, 210 hour program
 - 4 cohorts

MSUB is an official Prison Education Program provider

115

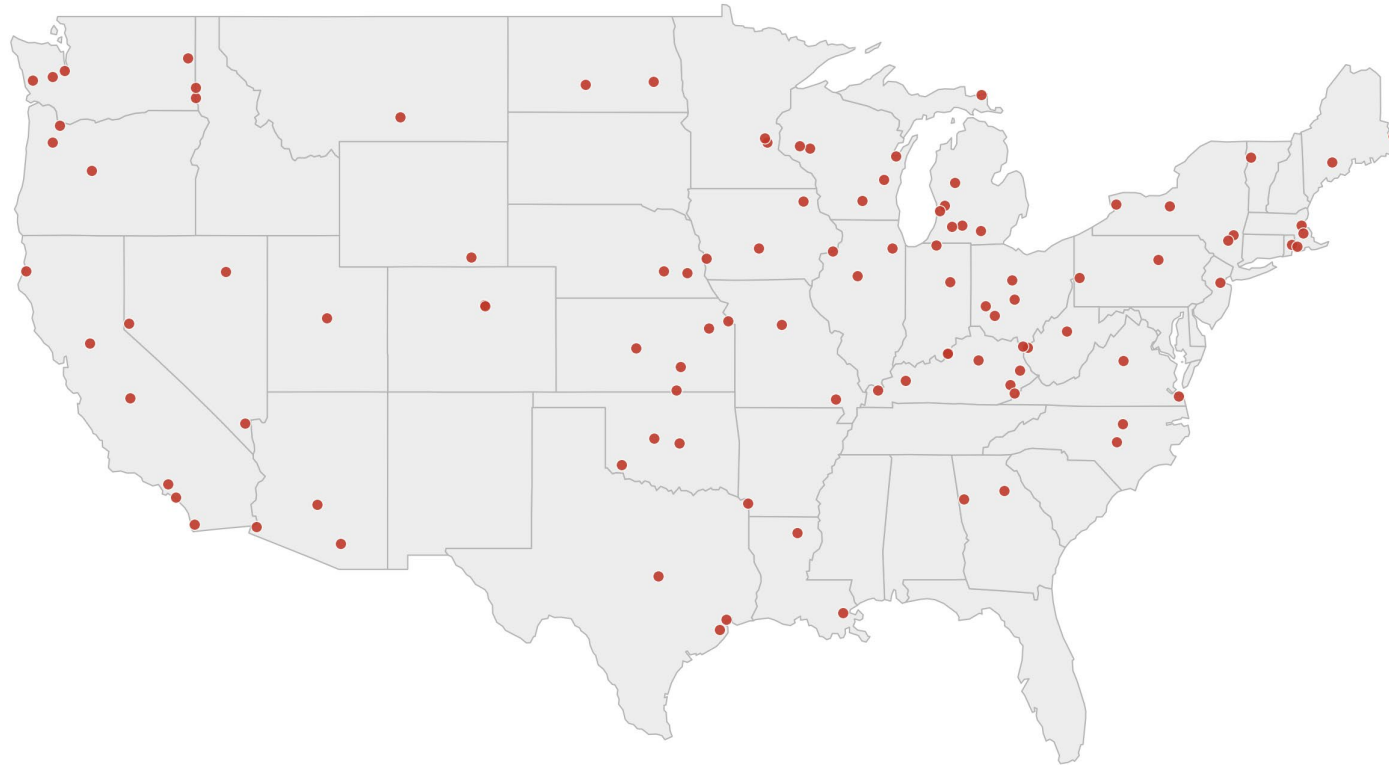
institutions nationally hold this designation — MSUB among them

- Approved to operate at **both** Montana State Prison and Montana Women's Prison
- Approved for the **AAS** (Associate of Applied Science) and **BSLS** (Bachelor of Science in Liberal Studies)
- Confirms eligibility for incarcerated students to use Federal Pell Grants toward these degrees



MSUB · CURRENT STRUCTURES

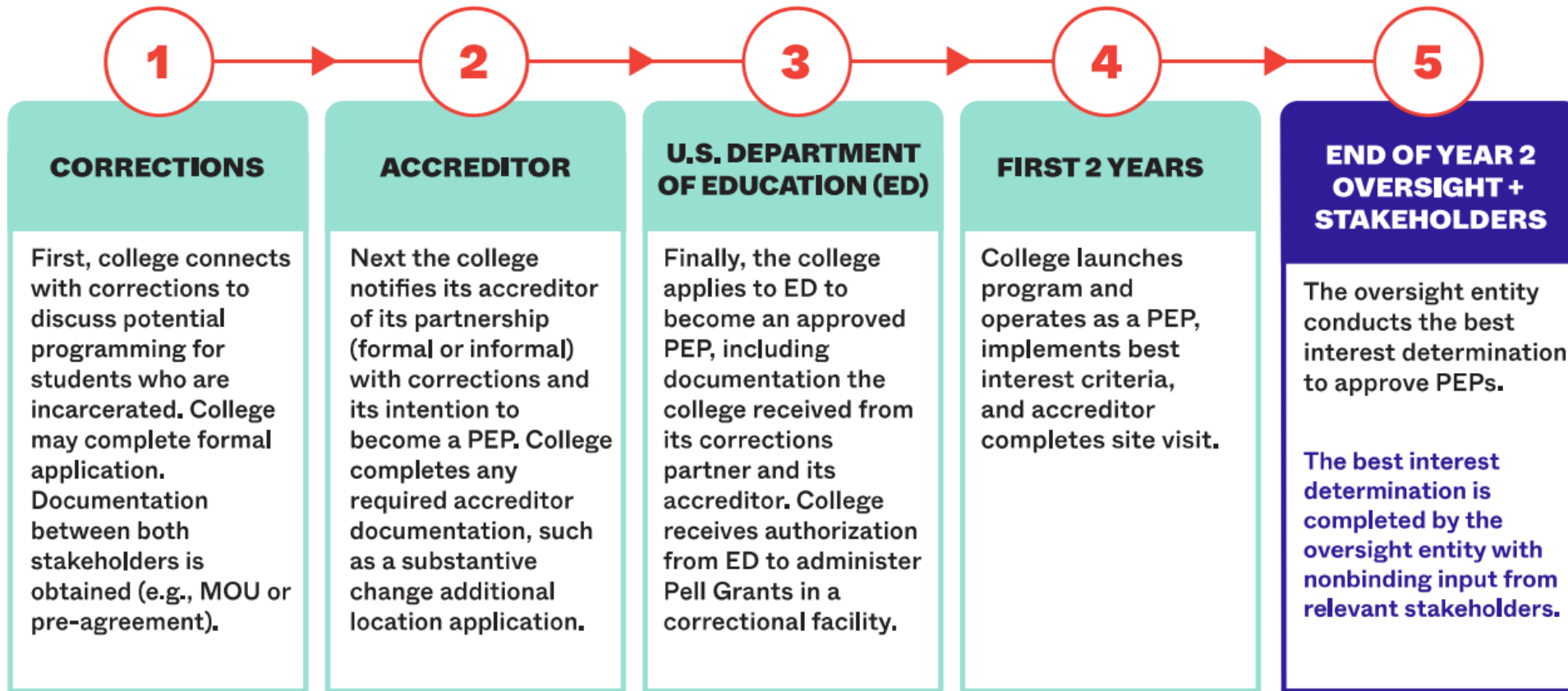
MSUB joins a growing national network



Public approval list, March 2026 — 115 verified institutions across 39 states and Puerto Rico.

Also approved (not shown on map): Caribbean University, Windward Community College

The prison education program (PEP) eligibility process



HIGHLANDS COLLEGE of MONTANA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Tammy Burke

Dean

HIGHLANDS COLLEGE
OF MONTANA TECH

A new pilot at Highlands — spring 2027

24

Person cohort

Men and women from Butte Prerelease

Spring 2027

Cohort start

Spring 2027 term, at Highlands College

1

Certificate, before release

Goal: complete a certificate program prior to pre-release

Why this pilot matters

It tests a credential-focused, time-bound model — designed to be completed before a participant's release date, so that students walk out with a workforce credential in hand. It also tests a cohort style model, versus a student designed pathway.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Eric Strauss, Director

**Scott Eychner, Rehabilitative and Enterprise
Division Chief**



**A system's mission is proven by who it's willing to serve
when it's hardest — not easiest.**

Thank you. Questions?