The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program
UGA-Clarke County Partnership, 2017-2019

Summary report of program accomplishments

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Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program
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Background

The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program

Inside-Out is an international educational model that "increases opportunities for men and women, inside and outside of prison, to have transformative learning experiences that emphasize collaboration and dialogue, inviting participants to take leadership in addressing crime, justice, and other issues of social concern."[i] The program began in 1997 at Temple University and since then Inside-Out classes have been taught at over 140 colleges and universities nationwide and in several other countries. More than 35,000 students have taken Inside-Out courses hosted by more than 200 correctional institutions, including county jails, state prisons, federal prisons, juvenile facilities, and community correctional facilities at all security levels.

"Academic prison education programs like Inside-Out build community across social difference, increase students' social capital, and motivate students to engage more fully with their communities."

The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program brings together campus-based college students and incarcerated students into one classroom for a college-level course. The course is comprised of half "inside" (incarcerated) students and half "outside" (non-incarcerated) students. Class meetings take place inside a correctional setting, whether a jail or prison. Through facilitated dialogue and active learning, the program creates a powerful and often transformative learning environment for participants. All students, whether "inside" or "outside" read the same texts, complete the same assignments, and participate with equal status in the classroom. The course concludes with a collaborative group project inspired by what has been learned with an eye toward community outreach.

Research has shown that prison education programs help reduce recidivism.[ii] While this is a desirable outcome to be sure, prison education programs like Inside-Out do much more. Inside-Out courses promote self-efficacy among incarcerated students, increasing students' beliefs in their own ability to be successful.[iii] Academic prison education programs like Inside-Out also build community across social difference,[iv] increase students' social capital, and motivate students to engage more fully with their communities.[v] These are features that can and do promote prosocial attitudes and behaviors.

In this report, we document the progress to-date of the Inside-Out partnership between the Sociology Department at the University of Georgia and the Clarke County Sheriff's Office - Jail Section. We provide information on the students, both inside and outside, who have participated in the program over the first four semesters of the program's existence. We also provide extensive evidence of what students gain from the program gleaned from student evaluations and course assignments. Our hope

is that this report reflects both the successes and challenges of the program so far, as well as a vision for an ongoing vibrant university-community partnership in Athens-Clarke County.

The UGA – Clarke County Partnership

In the fall of 2015, Dr. Sarah Shannon from UGA contacted then-Chief Tommy York to explore the possibility of starting an Inside-Out program at the Clarke County Jail. Dr. Shannon had known of the Inside-Out Program since her graduate studies at the University of Minnesota and was eager to start such a program in Athens. After an initial discussion it was clear that such a partnership was desirable to all involved. With that understanding in place, Dr. Shannon completed the Inside-Out Instructor Training Institute in Philadelphia, PA in May 2016. The week-long training involves 60+ hours of intensive instruction in the Inside-Out model, including three days spent inside a maximum security prison. Training topics include curriculum development, setting program parameters, developing institutional relationships, navigating complex group dynamics, and interactive pedagogical approaches.[vi]

The first Inside-Out course at the Clarke County Jail took place in spring semester of 2017. As expected due to jail population dynamics, attrition among the inside student group was high. Ultimately, six inside students completed the course. In subsequent semesters, in consultation with the jail and sociology department leadership at UGA, Dr. Shannon condensed the course so that it could be completed in eight weeks rather than a typical fifteen-week semester. This has meant meeting two times per week for 2.5 hours, as opposed to just once per week. Retention among the inside student group doubled as a result, with the subsequent three semesters graduating 11 or 12 inside students each round.

First UGA-Clarke County Jail Inside-Out Class, Spring 2017

The outside students from UGA are rigorously vetted through a month-long process that involves a written application and in-person interviews with Dr. Shannon. Potential students are informed of the unique nature and environment of the class. Through this extensive vetting process, Dr. Shannon seeks to ensure that each UGA student who is selected is mature, non-judgmental, and willing to abide by the boundaries and safety protocols required for the course. Around 50 UGA students apply each time the course is offered. Most students who apply are social science or criminal justice majors, but Dr. Shannon has also successfully recruited students from other departments and colleges at UGA.

Dr. Shannon and the jail's Programs Section staff have worked in close collaboration throughout the first two years of this partnership to develop and improve the program. For example, recruitment for inside students at the jail has been tailored to increase interest and participation. Dr. Shannon now visits the jail in the two weeks before the course begins, stopping in each eligible unit to announce the course, answer questions from interested residents, and generate a list of potential participants. Programs Director Ms. Donikia Gray, other programs staff, and the jail's classification unit then select the inside students from that list in line with jail protocols for program participation and safety.

UGA-Clarke County Jail Inside Out Class, Spring 2018

In the most recent iteration of the class (spring 2019) the waiting list among the jail population was over 80 people long. In the early weeks of the course, students are added from the waiting list when initially selected inside students are unexpectedly released. In addition, the past two course offerings have added incentives for inside students to complete course assignments via random drawings for phone cards among those who turn in each assignment. In spring 2019, for the first time, there were five inside students who completed all of the required assignments (12 total) and received an academic achievement certificate from Dr. Shannon at the closing ceremony.

Overall, 64 outside (UGA) students and 40 inside (jail) students have completed the course during its first four offerings. At the end of the course, a special closing ceremony includes administrators from each partnering institution who offer comments and congratulations. Student speakers, one from each group, describe what the course has meant to them. The students also present the results of their group projects, which are the capstone of the course. The event is always a high point for all involved. All students receive a certificate of completion and inside students receive a letter of recommendation from Dr. Shannon to highlight their accomplishments.

Program Accomplishments, 2017-2019

Course Evaluation Results

At the close of each semester, both inside and outside students complete an evaluation form that asks them to rate various elements of the course **on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)**. The table below shows average evaluation scores for all students and by each group separately (inside and outside) over the four semesters that the course has been offered to-date.

Most notably, students on average rate all elements of the course, including class format and assignments at a 4 or higher. In fact, students rate the class as an "overall learning experience" at 4.9 (4.8 for inside students, 5.0 for outside students). On the UGA side, the Inside-Out course has received the highest evaluation scores of any course offered in the sociology department each semester it has been offered.

	Class Format				Course Elements				
	Overall Format	**Topics**	**Small groups**	**Large group**	**Reading**	**Writing**	**Group project**	**Ceremony**	**Overall learning experience**
All	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.8	4.9
Inside	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.2	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.8
Outside	4.9	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.5	4.4	4.7	5.0

In terms of specific course components, all students rank the topics covered at 4.7. Inside students in particular favor small group discussions as compared to large group, but both are rated highly by all students. In terms of class assignments (readings, writing assignments, and the group project) all students rate these elements at a 4.2 or higher, on average. Notably, inside students' evaluations of the readings and writing assignments are on par with the outside students, although the outside students rate the writing assignments somewhat higher at 4.5 as compared to 4.3. As is typical in most college courses, the homework is seldom the most enjoyed aspect of class yet these evaluation scores are strong regardless. The inside students also appear to appreciate the group project somewhat more highly than the outside students (4.6 compared to 4.4), but all students strongly endorse this course element as a beneficial experience. Not surprisingly, the closing ceremony is also rated very highly by all students at 4.8 overall. The event is always much-anticipated by the students as a celebration and an opportunity to showcase their accomplishments in front of administrators from both UGA and the Clarke County Jail.

What students say about Inside-Out

Turning to what students have to say about the course, several key themes emerge from students' writing that highlight what students gain from participating in Inside-Out. The qualitative findings described below come directly from the inside and outside students that have participated in the program. To identify overarching themes, we analyzed open-ended course evaluation comments, students' reflection papers, and keepsake booklets on "what Inside-Out meant to me" from each semester. The themes that emerged from these sources fall under two broad categories: 1) skills building and 2) prosocial community building.

The skills that students say they gain from the course include writing, interpersonal communication, shared leadership and peer teaching, as well as setting goals and thinking "big picture." In terms of prosocial community building, students describe how the course breaks down stigma on both "sides" and inspires students to engage more fully in personal betterment and with their communities in order to promote positive social change. We discuss each theme below, providing extensive illustrative quotes from students across all four semesters.

"It was a personal challenge to myself to see if I could keep up with a college-level course and young, eager minds thirty-plus years removed from my own high school education. I like to think I held my own fairly well, if I do say so myself. I guess this old dog can still learn a few new tricks."

~Inside student, spring 2017

Skills Building

Building academic skills is an integral part of the Inside-Out experience for both inside and outside students. The writing assignments in particular provide the opportunity for inside students to practice writing and analytical skills that some have not used in years. Longer essays as well as short writing assignments allow all students synthesize what they are learning in course readings and class discussions as well as to reflect on their feelings about the class dynamics.

A broader goal of Inside-Out is to improve interpersonal communication skills among people from diverse backgrounds. This is accomplished through the design of the course itself, which is based almost exclusively on facilitated dialogue and active learning exercises. The Inside-Out model emphasizes students as peer teachers through group work and class discussions, which creates an atmosphere of shared leadership and equality between inside and outside students.

Writing. Inside students consistently express that the writing assignments are a way for them to hone skills they have not used much, sometimes in years. Others state that Inside-Out coursework gave them the chance to learn new skills that can help them earn their GED or succeed in other classes while incarcerated or upon release. One inside student from the spring 2019 class describes writing in the Inside-Out class the following way: "This class challenged me to think, write, and express myself in ways

I haven't thought about in years." This opinion was present among inside students from all four class sections.

As inside students engage in course writing assignments, they express a sense of surprise and accomplishment. A student from the spring 2017 class puts it this way, "I didn't know I was capable of maintaining a coherent string of thought or of fleshing out a 10-page essay and surprised myself." Similarly, another inside student from spring 2017 notes, "I also found it easier than I thought to write essays after so many years." An inside student from the spring 2018 class sums it up well in saying that he now knows he has "great power in [his] penmanship."

Inside students also describe the class as a chance to sharpen their minds more generally. From their perspective, much of jail life is spent finding ways to pass the time during the day, so the intellectual engagement provided by Inside-Out is a great escape from boredom. As one inside student put it, "in here, my brain was going soft, the class brought it back." An inside student from the spring 2019 class describes the class as "a chance to think about some issues or to think period." Further, an inside student from spring 2017 says it best when he says, "It was a personal challenge to myself to see if I could keep up with a college-level course and young, eager minds thirty-plus years removed from my own high school education. I like to think I held my own fairly well, if I do say so myself. I guess this old dog can still learn a few new tricks."

Likewise, the outside students identify beneficial effects of the writing assignments and the content of the class. In particular, the writing assignments give them the opportunity to reflect and discuss their feelings about the topics covered in the curriculum. This is critical since nearly all of the outside students have never set foot inside a correctional facility before, much less interacted with people who are incarcerated. Per an outside student from the spring 2017 class, they "loved the chance to reflect" as well as participate in a "judgment free" activity. Because of the new and sometimes intense nature of the material covered in the class, two outside students from the fall 2018 class describe the writing assignments as "helpful for personal growth" and "helpful in checking in with [my]self."

Even students who were typically less introspective found the writing helpful; as one outside student from spring 2017 says, "I'm not one to evaluate my own emotions, so forcing that out of me, while uncomfortable, was ultimately beneficial." Specifically, the writing assignments allow students "to voice opinions that I didn't feel comfortable sharing in the big group," as a spring 2018 outside student puts it. Processing these uncomfortable feelings appropriately is important to the success of the Inside-Out class because it allows students to internalize new perspectives in a safe space and come away with a better understanding of the criminal justice system and their inside peers.

Interpersonal communication. Inside and outside students alike report improvements in their ability to handle differences of opinion, listen respectfully to others' perspectives, work collaboratively, and show respect for others. One inside student from spring 2018 puts it eloquently: "I humbled myself a great deal. I learned to have patience. I learned that to be heard, you must first listen. I have learned to speak with a sense of understanding, to speak from my heart, with love for others." These sentiments are almost universal among inside students from all four class sections. They report learning or practicing skills like "how to open up more; [to] be more honest" and "the ability to listen to others." Additionally, Inside-Out provides inside students with tools to identify with the outside students, whom they initially view as very different from themselves. They leave the class "being able to relate to people [they] wouldn't normally speak to" and knowing "how to respect other people's opinions."

The outside students report a similar experience, with most stating that their listening skills improve through the Inside-Out experience. According to two outside students from spring 2019, they "learned how to listen better" and "the importance of multiple perspectives and listening to other people's stories." This allows outside students to "step back and listen to people with different lived experiences," as one outside student from spring 2017 puts it.

"I am so grateful to each and every one of my inside classmates for sharing their stories and wisdom with me and for teaching me lessons that I never would have learned in a traditional classroom setting."

~outside student, spring 2019

Outside students routinely express that the feedback from individuals who have experienced incarceration is more impactful to their learning than simply reading about it from an article or textbook. As a student from fall 2018 states, the outside students got to "really listen to the voices that need to be heard." According to a spring 2017 student, "Certainly, this experience has also made me much more patient and understanding to the views and opinions of others and left me with much food for thought." According to one spring 2017 outside student, class discussions "made me step out of my comfort zone and challenged me to do more than just listen but also let my voice be heard. I've always been more of a listener than talker because I'm always interested in learning more. Throughout the semester, I learned that sharing your opinion was just as valuable and helped get more feedback according to my own thoughts."

Shared leadership and peer teaching. One of the things that makes Inside-Out unique is that the professor functions as more of a facilitator than as an up-front teacher. The curriculum is almost entirely discussion- and activity-based. While the instructor provides structure and activities to keep the class on track, the students take leadership in shaping the direction of the conversations with their participation and questions. Further, the students are always seated in a circle, whether in small groups or large group, with inside and outside students alternating seats. This intentional setup lets the students interact as peers and participate freely in the discussion regardless of their incarceration status.

The inside students frequently express that they come into the class with a bit of skepticism but quickly find their niche in the group and become leaders with important contributions to make to the topics discussed. They find that their lived experiences are valued, informative, and impactful. One inside student from spring 2019 enjoys the class because it "seems these [outside] students really value our opinions; I have actually looked forward to their opinions also." Another inside student articulates how his initial skepticism changed as he experienced the peer teaching that Inside-Out aims to accomplish, saying that "[he] feels the original intention of this program was for them to learn about the jail/inmate experience, but they've taught me so much as well."

Another feature of Inside-Out that facilitates shared leadership is that the topics discussed affect each student differently. As a result, everyone has the opportunity to share knowledge and practice leadership skills at some point, depending on their prior knowledge and experience. For example, an inside student from spring 2017 notes, "I think depending on the subject, there was a constant shift in group leadership. Certain topics brought different people to the plate, so to speak. The respect for experience and the acknowledgement of wisdom was apparent regardless of the age or prior situation of the person or group delivering said knowledge." An inside student from spring 2019 was excited to come to class because "each week we got to work with different people and exchange new and different ideas."

By the end of each semester, the inside students are especially eager to learn, teach, and lead in each class session. Inside students' comments become generally more optimistic as the course progresses. One inside student from spring 2017 puts it like this, "It's like this class was a key that unlocked a part of my brain that I didn't even know was there. Again, it wasn't about the class material. It was about meeting new people and sharing this unique and positive experience in this otherwise dark and dismal place full of negativity and backward thinking. I am truly going to miss this class…"

The outside students likewise express enthusiasm for the experience of shared leadership and peer teaching but their observations differ slightly from the inside students. Overwhelmingly, outside students tend to express a new sense of gratitude toward the inside students. For example, students from spring 2019 comment that "I am so grateful to each and every one of my inside classmates for sharing their stories and wisdom with me and for teaching me lessons that I never would have learned in a traditional classroom setting" and "I want to thank the inside students for being so open. I don't think there's a way to put into words their impact on my views of those in the corrections system."

In addition to a sense of gratitude, outside students also notice that all students become more comfortable as the class progresses, which positively impacts the quality and quantity of discussions. As an outside student from spring 2017 puts it,

> "In the beginning of the semester, the outside students noticed that we were answering the majority of the questions and contributing most during class discussions. As weeks went by, you were able to see the break of the false notion that students on the outside were smarter and more knowledgeable than the inside students. I noticed that the comfortability of the inside students eventually surpassed the outside students."

Setting Goals and Thinking "Big Picture." Inside-Out creates an environment that allows students to think beyond their present circumstances. Whether they are currently living in the jail or worried about graduating from college, students express that this experience opens them up to the larger world around them and their place in it. By and large, inside students use this experience as motivation to get back on track, improve their self-worth, or set goals for further education or employment. Outside students tend to focus on how the course inspires their career trajectories post-college or desire to contribute to their community in some new way.

One theme that runs through most of the inside students' comments is increased motivation to better themselves in some way, often through a commitment to sobriety or to further education. A spring 2019 inside student says the class "motivated me to try harder and to remain clean and sober this time I'm released." Inside students from spring 2018 said, "The class has helped me find some hope and purpose, both of which were in short supply. I hope this positive momentum does not fade as the class draws to an end" and "I have set goals for myself and I will commit to them, I will also see them through as well. I have never been more determined to better myself in my entire life." One inside student from spring 2019 even observes that "some folks [referring to fellow inside students] may have been taken seriously for the first time in their lives. I hope so." This student also says he plans to sign up for as many other classes that are available to him during his time in the jail because Inside-Out has motivated him to better himself and be as prepared as possible for life once he is released.

The inside students also discuss feeling improved self-worth that they attribute to the Inside-Out experience. A spring 2017 inside student "gained thanks, camaraderie, and a renewed sense of self-worth." A spring 2019 inside student says, "That's what I like about this class; I can be somebody, with good ideas." This particular student spearheaded one of the final projects in the spring 2019 class. He transformed an idea from one of his favorite television shows into a creative final product that was worthy of an "A" in a college-level class.

Outside students also use this course to set goals, but focus more on their career trajectories and ways to contribute within their communities. Some students come into the class knowing that they want to work in criminal justice in some way, and the class simply solidified their drive to do so. Others, though, change their paths because of their experience with Inside-Out. One spring 2018 outside student, for example, says that "this experience has motivated me to pursue my interest and passion in the intersection of crime and education both professionally and just as a conscious citizen." Another spring 2018 outside student "gained a career path in that I want to devote research to psychological effects of solitary confinement."

Others found “a reason to use my voice” to do something in the community after graduation. Two spring 2019 students have already become involved with nonprofit organizations that work in prisons and jails. One is working with a tutoring program and the other plans to get involved with a correctional health program while she attends medical school. Overall, students express intentions to use what they learned

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>
> **~inside student, spring 2018**

and experienced in Inside-Out to make their communities better places and to treat people who are incarcerated with the humanity they deserve.

Building Prosocial Community

One of the overarching goals of the Inside-Out program is to decrease the “social distance” between the inside students and outside students. This goal is accomplished through building a sense of community within the classroom, which helps break down biases each student starts the course with, whether about what incarcerated people are like or what college students are like. A further goal of Inside-Out is to increase all students’ vision for bettering their communities and promoting positive social change. The active learning exercises, like role plays or case studies, and the final group project help students try on these ideas in a safe, diverse, and collaborative environment.

Many inside and outside students express a desire to become more active members of their communities after participating in Inside-Out. Even if their career choice is not in the criminal justice system, outside students tend to express increased empathy for others and a new passion to get involved in their communities through volunteering if not through their work. Inside students tend to say they feel more hope for the future and express positive intentions for change in their own lives. Some inside students sign up for more classes at the jail once Inside-Out is complete in order to further their education and personal growth.

Breaking Down Stigma. Both inside and outside students begin the class with preconceived ideas about how the other group will behave or think. Universally, students express that over the course of the semester these biases are replaced with a sense of camaraderie and compassion. Breaking down these stigmas is important because it allows people to see their similarities rather than their differences, decreasing judgment and fear, and facilitating collaboration and the free exchange of ideas.

For the inside students, this class changes opinions about both the outside students and their fellow inside students. Several inside students comment that they expected the outside students to be lazy, entitled, or apathetic, and absolutely did not expect to bond over their similarities with the UGA students to the extent that they did by the end of the course. For example, an inside student from spring 2019 says

that “what surprised me the most was how prepared the outside students were. You could tell they were excited and prepared.” Once students begin to see past their preconceived notions, a strong sense of community emerges within the classroom. As explained by two inside students from spring 2019, “people started feeling more comfortable with each other. People really value what people think and say in class” and “we developed connections and established trust. We realized our similarities and became comfortable as partners in class.” According to a fall 2018 inside student, “what affected me most was the compassion and empathy the outside students had shown. It was as if this was their most important class.”

Moreover, inside students also form new, more positive perceptions of themselves and their fellow inside students. As one inside student from spring 2018 puts it,

> “This class has changed my perspective on fellow inside students the most. It’s amazing to see how much we change when we’re in a class like Inside-Out from how we are in our dorms. This class shows me how much a positive, nurturing environment can influence behavior. Most of all, I feel like we have much higher expectations for ourselves when we’re in class and that our peers also expect more from us.”

Once the initial biases lessen, students explain that the class begins to feel like a genuine community connected through mutual trust and a desire to learn. This sense of connection is present in comments from all students across all class sections, despite differences in age and life experience. For example, an inside student from spring 2018 says,

> “Overall, I enjoyed the whole class to the point of knowing that I am old enough to be most of my classmates’ father, yet still having a connection. Not allowing an orange jumpsuit to overpower my mood amongst my situation and letting myself acknowledge that it’s not where I’m at or what I’m wearing but what I’m doing and what do I represent.”

An inside student from spring 2017 found it “very intriguing to observe how much the inside and outside students thought like one another, especially when it came to the subjects of community betterment, education, and to me, most important, the subject of rehabilitation over punishment.” Another inside student from spring 2018 explained the trust he felt among the group, saying, “I think we all have found some kind of connection with each other when it comes to law. If some of the outside students could help us, I’m pretty sure they would.” Ultimately, an inside student from spring 2019 sums it up well by observing that “maybe we’re not so different after all.”

Outside students also feel that the class significantly decreases their biases toward the inside students. One student observes, “From the beginning of the first class, I was amazed by how similar the inside students and I actually are.” Students continue to see more of these similarities as the semester progresses, even students who already considered themselves to be open-minded and knowledgeable about criminal justice. As one student from spring 2019 describes, “Even when I thought I was so progressive and free of prejudices, this class made me think about what I really feel and believe; it has been a looking glass into myself.” Finally, an outside student from Spring 2018 says it well:

> “The power of this program lies in what we all have in common, all of our differences, and how much each person has to contribute through dialogue. This program presents those participating with the opportunity to have conversations that make them question

their own thoughts and seek answers to questions with others. These conversations create solidarity through dialogue which gives rise to new, amazing ideas."

Recognizing commonalities is very impactful, as one spring 2018 outside student recalls: "one day before class started, I had an opportunity to talk to one of the inside students about the idea of purpose. He shared with me that his purpose is to be an educator. I soon realized that we had the same purpose. My purpose is to be an educator. It was at this moment when I realized that both the inside students and outside students are all one in the same." Finally, an outside student from spring 2019 observes that the Inside-Out class experience "makes it impossible to just label people who are currently incarcerated."

Community Engagement and Creating Change. For inside students, motivation for community engagement centers on two areas: 1) continuing their education while incarcerated and 2) engaging with their communities when released. One inside student from Spring 2019 exemplifies the combination of both of these ideas. This particular student started off the course quiet and unsure of himself, but by the end of the class he was a clear leader who earned an academic excellence certificate for the quality of his work. This experience boosted his confidence enough to enroll in other classes and complete his GED at the jail. In his words,

> "I dropped out of high school in 11th grade. Since joining this class it made me join the GED class and further my education. I also committed myself to helping out with the youth, like when I get out do more community service, visit high schools, and talk with the youth and encourage them to further their education and show them life of a convicted felon is not the way to go."

This same inside student wants to "make my parents proud and show them how sorry I am" and "would like to get involved with my community, maybe even joining the Big Brother program."

Several other inside students across the semesters discuss how they are inspired to work toward their GED. One spring 2019 inside student even made a commitment to "keep this enthusiasm I got from this class to change. I owe it to this class to become a better person, and I do have value. My commitment is to do better, now I owe it to each person in this

GROUP PROJECTS

Each semester features a collaborative group project as the capstone of the course. Projects have included:

- **A proposal for a program to break down stigma and shame around incarceration in Athens-Clarke County**
- **A proposal for a new, comprehensive program to decrease recidivism**
- **A legal binder and pamphlets to inform people of their legal rights inside and outside of jail**
- **Proposals for a new prison facility and community-based programs to increase public awareness of the consequences of crime and incarceration**

class. Seems the students see promise in all of us, we need to live up to it, remember we are somebody. I can be somebody."

Inside students take inspiration from the outside students' desire to change the criminal justice system. Two spring 2018 inside students express more hope for the future and respect for the younger generation. In their words, "the class gave me hope for the next generation" and "there is hope in the future of our youth where I thought there was none." Out of their newfound respect for and from outside students, inside students feel a freedom from judgment and a responsibility to their new peers to make positive changes. "The students and the instructor care about the subjects and topics we discuss. And if given the opportunity you all would do something about it. And that inspires me to help in any way I can. That's why I don't mind talking about what I've been through and how it makes me feel about myself," says an inside student from Spring 2019. Likewise, an inside student from spring 2018 says, "The passion you all put into the class inspires me that I'm part of something big and beautiful. I've never had the chance to be a part of something that finally makes me feel like I'm doing something right."

Flier created by fall 2018 class as part of group project on legal rights

Because outside students are not currently incarcerated they are able to make specific commitments to community engagement and many begin to do so during or soon after the course ends. Key to their expressed motivation are the new attitudes and increased empathy they gained toward their inside student peers throughout the course. As one outside student says, "It has meant more than just learning; I think this class has helped challenge me to become more empathetic and to promote reform." A spring 2019 outside student observes that "I have learned so much about empathy and seeing people as exactly that - human." This is a common perspective taken by the outside students. As two spring 2019 students state, "I leave this class hopeful. I leave knowing there are 25-30 other people who have not only learned what I have learned, but who see a different future and want to be a part of making that future a reality" and "Inside-Out has inspired me to do more community outreach to continue to give incarcerated people their own voice."

This empathy and commitment to community engagement extends past generalities and into specific action for many of the outside students. For example, an outside student from spring 2018 made a commitment to having regular, challenging conversations with family and friends about criminal justice issues. She hopes "through these conversations [with friends and family], staying informed and exercising my right to vote in national, state, and local elections, and contacting my representatives when relevant, that I can become an activist for prison reform in the U.S. I am particularly passionate about returning the right to vote to those who have been convicted of felonies." This student has subsequently stayed in touch with Dr. Shannon, requesting tips and materials to use in her ongoing learning and conversations.

Other outside students plan to use this new information to help them succeed in their careers in the criminal justice system. A student from spring 2017, who plans to work in law enforcement observes that "currently, the [town] police department where I will be working requires no experience or higher education. This is not a good thing. Had I just joined the force I would have lived in one place my entire life and have no social experience/opinions outside of a town of 10,000. I feel as though I can provide useful insight to my fellow officers and maybe even be able to raise the requirements as I progress through the ranks." This is a very common sentiment from outside students who plan careers in law enforcement and the legal profession. They frequently comment on how what they learned in Inside-Out, especially from their inside student peers, will impact how they treat people they encounter in the criminal justice system.

Other students similarly express that they will take their new perspectives to jobs in the medical field, journalism, education, and business. Finally, some outside students have decided to change careers completely or to continue into graduate studies to make a difference, like this outside student: "Because of Inside-Out, I also seek to place my creative stamp on the world by creating my own nonprofit organization that aims to decrease high recidivism rates within the United States. Because of this, I have decided to advance my studies at the University of Georgia Nonprofit Management and Leadership master's program."

UGA-Clarke County Jail Inside-Out Class, spring 2019

Summary

Inside-Out at UGA in partnership with the Clarke County Jail is **providing a unique and potentially transformative educational experience** for all the students that participate, whether they are inside or outside students. As demonstrated through the evaluation scores and extensive student comments detailed in this report, Inside-Out at the Clarke County Jail is a highly valued educational experience and has been successful at increasing students' skills in writing, interpersonal communication, leadership, and setting goals. The inclusive nature of the discussion-based classroom creates a comfortable atmosphere in which biases and stereotypes are challenged and community goodwill is built. This class often has such an impact on students that they want to continue building on what they learned when the class is over, whether it is through their further education, personal betterment, careers, or volunteering.

As shown in this report, **Inside-Out provides an opportunity for inside students to engage in prosocial community unlike any other activity currently offered at the jail**. By bringing in outside students and building a collaborative learning environment among people from such diverse backgrounds, inside students are provided a vehicle for demonstrating maturity and self-control, exercising leadership, and teaching others based on their lived experience in the criminal justice system. Inside students consistently express that having their opinions valued and heard by their fellow students is empowering. As a result, Inside-Out reinforces and enhances prosocial behaviors and attitudes among inside students, including respect for diverse viewpoints, team work, collaboration, empathy, and civic engagement.

The opportunity to engage in college-level coursework, including reading and writing, often inspires inside students to set goals for continued education, especially seeking their GED and enrolling in subsequent courses inside and outside of jail. Inside students frequently surprise themselves and feel proud of how much they are able to accomplish in the course, evidence that Inside-Out enhances inside students' sense of self-efficacy (belief in their own ability to succeed).

For outside students, **Inside-Out is an "experiential learning" opportunity like no other currently offered at the University of Georgia**. As shown in this report, outside students gain a broader perspective on the criminal justice system that no typical classroom experience can give them. In addition to receiving the highest evaluation scores of any sociology course at UGA every semester it is offered, Dr. Shannon has been recognized with several teaching awards in part due to teaching Inside-Out, including the prestigious Richard B. Russell Award (2019),[vii] the Creative Teaching Award (2019),[viii] and the Sandy Beaver Excellence in Teaching Award (2017).[ix]

Outside students are universally inspired to engage in their careers and communities in new and more compassionate ways as a result of this course. For those who plan careers in the criminal justice system, often law enforcement or law, Inside-Out serves as an opportunity for real world exposure to part of that system. Outside students not only express that this course is eye-opening, but that it breaks down preconceived notions they have about who is incarcerated and what people in that situation are like. As a result, outside students begin to see how complicated criminal justice is and express greater appreciation for the humanity of all those who are involved in that system.

Challenges and Future Opportunities

Of course, implementing and sustaining a program like Inside-Out is not without its challenges. As noted above, adjustments have been made with each iteration of the course in order to improve its delivery. In particular, instead of running the course over a typical 15-week UGA semester, Dr. Shannon has condensed the course into eight weeks in order to account for high levels of turnover at the jail. While this significant adjustment has doubled the completion rate for inside students, attrition is still an issue and maintaining an equal number of inside and outside students remains elusive. It may be that this is just the reality of teaching Inside-Out in a jail setting; however, discussions about continuing to improve retention and completion of the course for inside students are certainly warranted for future offerings.

In addition, Inside-Out requires a high level of commitment and resources from both partners. The course is time-intensive, requires funding (for inside student supplies),[x] and places high demands on jail staff while outside students are at the jail. The impact of the course stems from the engaged learning that takes place between inside and outside students. But this, of course, comes with heightened security concerns. It is thus of the utmost importance that both institutions involved feel that the program is of high quality and beneficial enough to warrant these significant inputs. Discussions about future iterations of the class should include the sustainability of the course in this regard and a new memorandum of understanding should be signed.

As the student comments elaborated in this report show, participants frequently verbalize desire and commitment to change. At this point, however, we are not tracking what happens next for inside students. Outside students at UGA stay in touch with each other and with Dr. Shannon via a Facebook group and an email listserv. In December 2018, Dr. Shannon hosted the first-ever alumni gathering for UGA outside student alumni. As a result, outside students receive ongoing support from each other and Dr. Shannon to enact the commitments they make after the course is over.

This kind of follow-up is more challenging for inside students given their incarceration status and the transient nature of their stay at the jail. One model that is used by Inside-Out programs nationwide (as well as two other countries) is the “Think Tank.”[xi] Inside-Out Think Tanks are “groups of Inside-Out alumni (both incarcerated and non-incarcerated) and/or trained faculty who meet regularly on a volunteer basis at a correctional facility.” These groups continue to operate within the Inside-Out model after the course is over by developing collaborative projects, which may include leadership development, re-entry programs, training Inside-Out faculty, or community workshops on topics of local concern. A Think Tank has not yet been developed within the UGA-Clarke County Jail partnership but certainly could and would provide a mechanism for interested students to continue to engage with what they have learned in the course. Think Tanks are typically very flexible and, unlike the Inside-Out course, are amenable to incorporating new members on a rolling basis as participants are released and/or new alumni complete the course.

In large part due to her experience with Inside-Out, Dr. Shannon started a community initiative in 2017 called the Athens Reentry Collaborative.[xii] The group meets every Tuesday afternoon at the Sparrows Nest in downtown Athens and provides a space for formerly incarcerated people to share successes and struggles with one another, help each other navigate barriers and challenges, and “give back” by helping others as well as oneself. The group was co-founded with several Athens community members who have themselves been incarcerated in the past, including Jamie Scott of Sparrow’s Nest, John Lash of the

Georgia Conflict Center, and Shane Sims of People Living in Recovery. So far, two inside student alumni from the Clarke County Jail have participated in the group. There is great potential for this venue to provide follow-up and support for inside student alumni as the group continues to develop.

Another promising avenue for follow-up, especially for inside student alumni, would be to work with additional community partners to build a network or "pipeline" for continuing education, whether GED or college. Potential partners could include Goodwill and Athens Technical College. Programs to help justice-involved people gain education and skills already exist, but greater efforts at collaboration could be made to link inside student alumni with these resources when they are released in order to help them enact the goals they set during the course.

Finally, due to time and resource constraints, Dr. Shannon has not yet embarked on a concerted research program to study the effects and outcomes of this Inside-Out program. This could certainly be done but would require further commitment and resources from both institutions to conduct a high quality study. Dr. Shannon would absolutely welcome a conversation with the Sheriff's Office about whether and how research on this program would be useful and informative for all involved.

[i] More information on the history and philosophy of Inside-Out available here: http://www.insideoutcenter.org/

ii Bozick, Robert, Jennifer Steele, Lois Davis, and Susan Turner. 2018. "Does Providing Inmates with Education Improve Postrelease Outcomes? A Meta-Analysis of Correctional Education Programs in the United States." *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 14:389-428.

iii Allred, Sarah L., Lana D. Harrison, and Daniel J. O'Connell. 2013. "Self-Efficacy: An Important Aspect of Prison-Based Learning." *The Prison Journal*, 93(2): 211-233.

iv Allred, Sarah L., Nathan Belche, and Todd Robinson. 2013. "Relational Learning and the Inside-Out Experience: A Pathway to Building Capacities, Transformative Perspectives, and a Deeper Understanding of Self, Community, and Others." Pp. 209-225 in Davis, S. W., & Roswell, B. S. (Eds.), *Turning Teaching Inside Out: A Pedagogy of Transformation for Community-Based Education*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

v McCorkel, Jill and Robert DeFina. 2019. "Beyond Recidivism: Identifying the Liberatory Possibilities of Prison Higher Education." *Critical Education*, 10(3): 1-19.

vi More information on the Inside-Out instructor training institute available here: http://www.insideoutcenter.org/training.html

vii 2019 Russell Award winners announcement: https://news.uga.edu/2019-russell-teaching-award-recipients/

viii 2019 Creative Teaching Award announcement: https://ovpi.uga.edu/news/cta-2019/

ix List of Sand Beaver Excellence in Teaching Award winners: https://franklin.uga.edu/sites/default/files/SB%20EXCELLENCE%20IN%20TEACHING%20WINNERS%20LIST_4.pdf

x Funding has been provided for inside student books by the UGA Office of Service Learning three out of the four semesters to-date. The jail provides all paper and pencils, folders, as well as incentives for inside students (phone card drawings). Dr. Shannon provides all photocopies of course handouts and PDFs of course readings.

xi More information on Inside-Out Think Tanks available here: http://www.insideoutcenter.org/think-tanks.html

xii Athens Reentry Collaborative Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/AthensReentry/