# Campus Readiness, Champions, and Buy-In

The on-campus partnerships a degree program inside cannot start without.

A prison education program is resource-intensive and cannot run on good intentions. Before starting, ask whether your campus is ready to invest the resources, create the collaboration, and commit faculty who want this work. A degree offering may be needed and valuable, but readiness and buy-in decide whether it survives.

## KEY CONCEPTS

### 1 Leadership support is non-negotiable

The university president's office and the provost's office have to be supportive and collaborative, and the academic side must buy in with programming, teaching, and money.

### 2 Find true champions

You want partners who believe in the mission and do the work: "We will find that GE class. We will make the budget work. One step at a time." Financial aid leadership is a vital partner.

### 3 Mission alignment carries the case

When the program fits the university's ethos of serving communities and making impact, the argument becomes simple: this aligns exactly with what the university should be doing.

### 4 Partnership is a discipline

A partnership mentality takes work. It starts with digging into your own assumptions and expectations, and from the conviction that what you create together will be better.

## PARTNERS YOU WILL NEED

- The university president's office
- The provost's office
- The executive director of financial aid
- Academic departments providing courses and faculty
- Faculty who want to do this work
- The corrections department (e.g., CDCR)

## STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE

### Test campus readiness before you start

Ask directly: will the campus invest the resources, create the collaboration, and commit faculty who want this work? A needed, meaningful degree offering is not enough by itself.

### Recruit a champion in every key office

Look for people who truly believe in the mission and will solve problems one step at a time, from finding the GE class to making the budget work.

### Anchor the program in the university's mission

Frame the work around the communities the university serves and the impact it exists to make, so support becomes an expression of institutional identity, not a favor.

### Communicate ten times more

The only way to make it work is communication. When you think you have communicated enough, do ten times more, and put your assumptions and expectations on the table explicitly.

## QUICK CHECKLIST

- ☐ Confirm support from the president's and provost's offices
- ☐ Engage financial aid leadership early
- ☐ Secure academic-side commitment: courses, faculty, funding
- ☐ Name a champion in each key office
- ☐ Write down your assumptions and test them
- ☐ Schedule far more communication than feels necessary

## KEY TERMS

**Champion** • A partner who believes in the mission and does the work.

**Buy-in** • Concrete commitment of programming, teaching, and money, not just approval.

**GE class** • A general education course required for a degree.