

# The Echo

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution Newsletter

### Points of Interest:

- Beekeeping program accepts applicants for 2022.
- Gardening program accepts applicants for 2022.
- Multiple Clerk Job Openings.

## From GED to PhD

Twenty Years Dedicated to Education

Written by Phillip Luna

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"Here is something I've never heard of happening in prison", states Educator Mr. Villars as he begins the graduation ceremony. "We have one student," he continues, "who has earned a PhD..." And at the mention of the three little letters the crowd erupts in cheers drowning out the rest of the sentence.

On December 10th, 2021, in front of dozens of GED graduates and Staff Members, AIC Eric Burnham is presented with a PhD in Psychology and Counseling, with an emphasis on the integration of Psychology and Theology. A degree he earned entirely while being incarcerated. As Mr. Villars prepares to call Dr. Burnham to the podium, he describes him as, "a diligent, hard working and dedicated student," further stating that the obstacles he faced were much more than someone might experience outside of prison.

But Burnham's journey doesn't begin on December 10th, 2021. Rather it began 20 years prior, when he was arrested in

2001. Burnham became incarcerated at the age of 21 and described himself as socially awkward, undereducated, and psychologically underdeveloped as result of drug and alcohol abuse. He earned his GED in 2003 and from there began his pursuit of post-secondary education.

*"I cannot adequately express my gratitude for your life changing investment."*

Upon taking the podium, Burnham first acknowledges his mother, who paid for his education since he began college courses nearly twenty years ago. "Although I had a history of making poor decisions, she sent me the money providing me the opportunity to use it on my education. Thank you," he says, "I cannot adequately express my gratitude for your life changing investment."



(...continued on page 2)

## Important Note

The FAFSA is not available to incarcerated students until 2023.

The FAFSA Simplification Act, part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, will expand eligibility for the federal Pell Grant to include incarcerated students. These students will be able to take advantage of the grant in 2023.

The DOC Education Office in Salem will give updates on when FAFSA applications are available.

## From GED to Ph.D - Twenty Years Dedicated to Education (...continued from page 1)



During the 2021 EOCl graduation ceremony, PhD recipient Eric Burnham acknowledges his family support as the foundation of his success, but one can't help but notice there are no families in attendance at this graduation ceremony. A stark contrast to previous graduations, but a result of COVID protocols this time around. In lieu of family, some of Burnham's friends are present.

AIC Cameron Mikkelson, a long time friend of Burnham who attended the graduation ceremony, says, *"I lived with Burnham for six years and consider him to be one of the best people I have met during my time in prison, possibly in my entire life. I have never seen such commitment to studying, 2-3 hours per day for many years. His willingness to help others was admirable as well. He was always happy to take time out of his schedule to help others achieve their own academic goals."* Another friend, AIC Peter Cuddie, states, *"It has been inspiring to see somebody accomplish so much in such a dark and oppressive environment."*

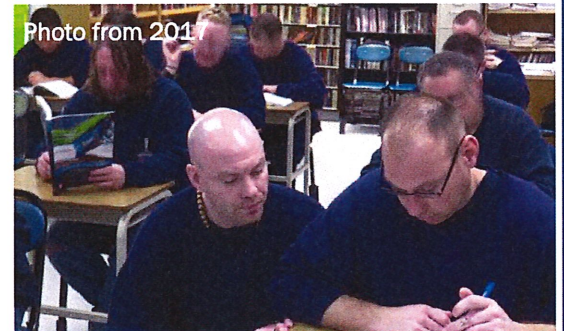
*"Hindsight helps you win the next battle, not the last one."*

Burnham's speech is long, but deservedly so, and full of self reflection. *"Over the years I have had plenty of time to reflect, hindsight helps you win the next battle, not the last one,"* he further states, *"nobody put me here, I did this to myself."* And while much of his speech champions the power of resilience and determination, nothing is

more impactful than the metaphor he uses to compare his former self to a weed in a garden. *"I was a weed,"* he explains, *"A plant considered undesirable... I don't know of a better way to describe the way I was back then. I was a weed. The way I was living was aimless and I provided nothing of value to anyone. I wanted my life to matter and I knew for my life to matter I couldn't live the way I was."*

*"I was a weed... I don't know of a better way to describe the way I was back then. I was a weed."*

*"I'm not a weed today; I have found meaning in using my faith, my experience, and my education to help those who struggle as I do... Nobody should stay lost in the weeds."*



Since 2008, Burnham has also worked as a tutor in the Education Department, spending more than a decade using his experience to mentor others. Longtime co-worker and friend Ryan Huebner says Burnham is, *"A man who weighs his words before speaking... genuine and kind-hearted."*

Burnham concludes his speech by addressing the more than 30 GED graduates in attendance, *"...doors are open to you,"* he says, *"Your future is not determined by your past... You can find 1000 excuses to fail, but you only need one to succeed."* While earning any degree is rare among incarcerated individuals, one thing is for certain - the path is made easier for those who follow by those who first pave the road.

# GED Graduates

More Than 30 Students Earn GED



For some of the 2021 GED graduates, they are just beginning their education journey. Congratulations to the class of 2021!

## 2021 GED Graduates:

Axsael Aguirre  
Miguel Arenas-Garcia  
Cameron Avery  
Ryan Belt  
John Busby  
Roajsha Calhoun  
Daniel Carter  
Jhosuami Colon-Lebron  
Robert Davis  
Jason Garcia

Timothy Gassner  
Jordan Grater  
Cristian Guillen Torres  
Kevin Lara-Alvarez  
Arthuro Leon  
Chayse Teach  
Adalbert Sumona-Velasco  
Oscar Sanchez-Mandujano  
Joseph Mace  
Salvador Marcelo  
Juan Mares  
Jason Mathers  
Douglas McCann  
Michael McCollum  
Jose Mecott-Rios  
Jose Medina-Galan  
Pedro Mora-Gomez  
Michael Morris  
Raymond Scott  
Joseph Tripp  
Dakota Willis  
Albert Vonslowski



# Snapshots Around EOCI

A Quick Look at This Month's Projects

Photography by Patrick Gazeley-Romney

## Carpentry Shop

The Carpentry Shop continues to complete work orders for spaces around the institution.



Millwright Buford Harper and Welder Gerry Hight cleaning and repairing the carpentry shop hopper.

## Metal Shop

The Metal Shop continues to produce high quality metal fabrications for use inside and outside of the institution.

Left: Welders Owen Hatridge and Jonathan Ramirez use a plasma torch to cut metal to size.

Right: Anthony Hill and Daniel Carter put welds on a piece they are fabricating.



## Electrical Shop

The electrical shop is responsible for routine maintenance on most of the electrical systems around the institution.

Peter Cuddie fixes a radio for use in the carpentry shop.



Left: Steven Larsen working on a transformer.

Middle: Cameron Mikkelsen terminating a breaker.

Right: Chase Martin putting a forward/reverse controller on a motor starter.



# A Year in Retrospect

Focusing on the Positive of 2021

Written by Phillip Luna

While 2020 was probably one of the most difficult years in recent memory, 2021 proved to be substantially better - even for those of us incarcerated. It's easy to forget all the good things that happen throughout the year, so just to jog your memory here is a look back at 2021.

**Stimulus/EIP Checks:** On the list of good things that happened this year, AICs receiving stimulus checks is at the very top. Since PRAS awards have never changed and canteen prices have continued to increase, a little extra funds came as a welcome relief. Clever AICs who took the opportunity to invest a portion of their EIP check have created financial stability for their future.

**Senate Bill and Clemency Petitions:** Senate Bill 844 and an increase in granted Clemency Petitions brought signs of hope to many and a flurry of law library call outs. It's hard to imagine a better feeling than seeing a friend transport out after being granted clemency and given a second opportunity at life.

**FAFSA for AICs:** After nearly 30 years without financial aid opportunities for a college education, AICs everywhere can rejoice as they will become eligible for FAFSA in 2023. Post-secondary education is not financially viable for most AICs - despite the well documented benefits - and FAFSA can help alleviate that financial strain.

**The Enrichment Club Started:** Clubs have long been absent at EOCl and the start the Enrichment Club is a change in direction. Opportunities for altruism are rare in a correctional setting and this club allows AICs to invest their time and energy into something that benefits the communities inside and out.

**First Video Games at EOCl:** A few years ago, less than a handful of people would have believed there would be any type of video

game system at EOCl. Today, the institution leads the way on the Nintendo Switch Lite platform. Nearly 450 AICs at this institution own a video game console.

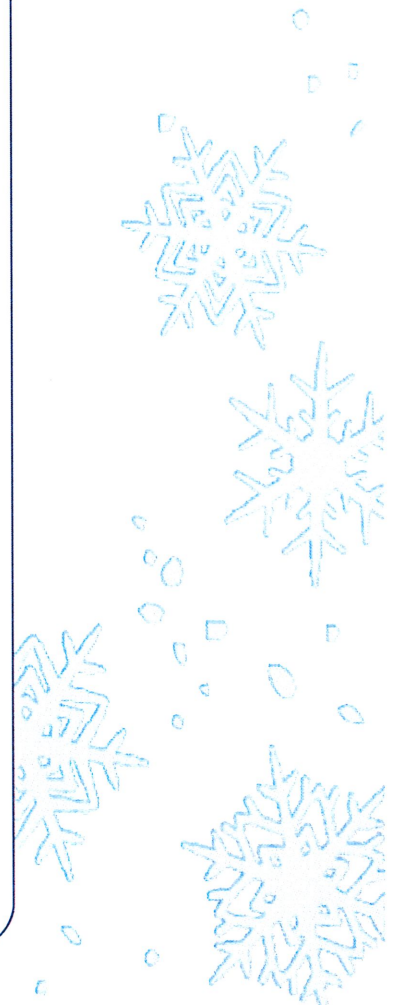
**Games Ordered Like Books:** It's easy to miss this one, but being able to have video games ordered and sent through the mail is a huge win for Nintendo Switch owners. Especially considering the alternative would be to have a fundraiser for each video game.

**Fundraisers Returned:** In conjunction with the Enrichment Club, fundraisers returned to the institution. The Domino's Pizza fundraiser was a huge success - but not without it's hiccups. Delivering pizza's mid-day to the Garment Factory was weird, but a lesson learned. The Seasonings and Spices fundraiser was a sloppy mess - but now that some of the spices are being delivered, no one seems to be complaining.

**Enhanced Meals:** Enhanced Meals also returned to the institution, first with the Chicken Strip, Onion Ring, and Jojo meal and next with the Ice Cream Float event. These are at-cost meals/desserts that occur periodically throughout the year.

It's easy to lose focus on the positive, but in retrospect this year may have been one of the best ever for an AIC. Of course there are some negatives, but it is hard to be upset about jelly only being served with the Sunday breakfast now, when stimulus checks, Senate Bill 844, and even the return of FAFSA are **once and a lifetime events**. Its important to take a moment to reflect on how many good things happened this year.

What does 2022 hold? New weight equipment? PRAS Award Increases? A fully open visiting room? The return of Incentive Movies in Multi? No one knows for certain what will happen in 2022, but staying positive and remembering all the good things sure makes doing time easier.



# Holiday Treats

Decorating Sugar Cookies Offers a Sense of Nostalgia

Written by Phillip Luna

## Upcoming Treats

### December 24th:

Loaded Brownie and a Coca-Cola.

### December 31st:

Two home-made Mounds Bars and a Dr. Pepper.



Decorating sugar cookies is a tradition in most households this time of year and the four with frosting surprise was a welcome treat for AICs. When asked why this item was chosen, Assistant Superintendent of Correctional Rehabilitation, Mrs. Neistadt, says “[it was] *something that reminded us of the holiday season and something that might give a little bit of joy to the men at EOCl.*”

While many of the typical EOCl holiday events are not available due to COVID protocols, Correctional Rehabilitation staff has made substantial efforts to offer some joy this time of year.

Food Services Manager Ms. Emory and her team of culinary wizards have concocted some unique home-made treats this season. After dinner on December 24th, every AIC will receive a loaded brownie (with specialty chocolates used) and a Coca-Cola. On December 31st, each AIC will receive two, four ounce, home-made Mounds Bars and a Dr. Pepper. Let’s not forget the specialty breakfast pastries and holiday meals on Christmas and New Years.

A special thanks from all the AICs at EOCl goes out to Correctional Rehabilitation and Food Services staff for spreading some holiday cheer!



# Valentines Day Pictures

Hurry Up and Buy Your Photo Ticket

Provided by Multi

On January 8th and 9th AICs will be able to take Valentines Day photos in Multi. Photos will have the normal Valentine’s Day back drops (no digital backgrounds).

**To Order:** To order a photo ticket, send a stamped and verified CD-28 to Multi. Pay to: **Photo 2590**. Photo tickets will not be available for purchase on the day of the event. All orders are must be submitted before the end of the year.

**Day of the Event:** Unit’s will be called down to take photos. Please stay on your unit

until you are called. Photo tickets will not be available the day of purchase.



# Finishing With a Flourish

Enrichment Club Has Busy Month

Written by Phillip Luna

Enrichment Club



The Enrichment Club handed out a portion of the Seasonings and Spices fundraiser on December 8th, 2021. Pictured above, Club Members Ben Edwards and Dennis Waters fill the orders, which were sorted and then delivered to the housing units. Nearly 1,500 individual seasonings were ordered in this fundraiser. Five of the 16 seasonings are currently on back order and every missing component has been recorded. When the remaining seasonings arrive they will be sorted and delivered. The vendor for this event, *Walkenhorst's*, has advised they are working diligently to fill the remaining order and delivery is expected in the next few weeks.

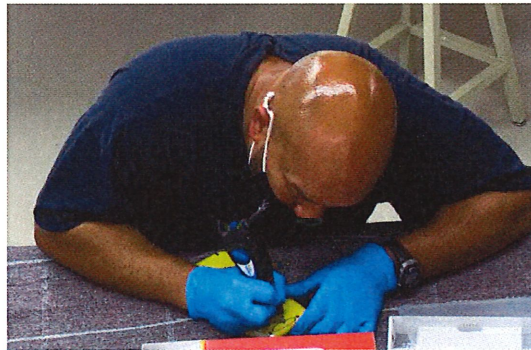


Shown above, Club Member Keaton Stephens labels paper bags for use in distribution.

In a statement, Club Vice President Derrick says, "While we are disappointed we are unable to provide all of the spices that were ordered, we felt it was important to at least give out what we had before the start of holidays. Hopefully, we will receive the remaining spices soon."

Five days later on December 13th, the Enrichment Club received three month's worth of Nintendo Switch Lite (NS Lite) orders. A total of 56 NS Lites were received, filling orders from September, October, and November. All 56 consoles were promptly tested, cataloged, engraved, and delivered to the AICs who purchased them. Currently, there are no outstanding orders; however, CD-28s are processed on the 15th (or closest working day) each month and a December order will be placed shortly. The turnaround time for this fundraiser is usually 12 weeks from the time the CD-28 is processed.

There are multiple facilities in Oregon now working with the vendor and this is a first-come, first-serve process. As always, consoles are processed the same day the Enrichment club receives them.



Capping off a busy month, the Enrichment Club held an election for council positions in 2022 - marking the end of the first year for the Club. Club President Luna states, "The council is mostly the same from last year, but I think consistency will benefit the Club overall. Council positions have more responsibility, but they are really just cogs making the Club function. Every Club Member - council or general - has only one vote to cast. Right now we have a really good group of guys and that is what makes the Club operate well. With the 17 members we have in this group I think we can do some really cool things this year."

Capping off a busy month, the Enrichment Club held an election for council positions in 2022.

## Club Council for 2022

President: Phillip Luna

VP: David Derrick

Secretary: Pat Gazeley-Romney

Treasurer: Alex Hernandez

Ambassador: Will Cote

Members:

Ben Edwards

Warren Doescher

Bryan Armas

Troy Kirk

Seth Mathews

Edson Molina

Daniel Moore

James Renfro

Nico Sias

Bryan Simmons

Keaton Stephens

Dennis Waters

# Careers in the Spotlight

## Geothermal Energy

Written by Brett Lloyd



Brett Lloyd,  
Staff Writer, *The Echo*

Lloyd is a Staff Writer for *The Echo* and in training to be a facilitator for the Gardening, Roots of Success, and Beekeeping programs.

The biting wind howls across the rocky landscape as you get the signal from your supervisor to begin. Protected, and warm inside your cab, you flip a switch that brings your machinery rumbling to life. Preliminary tests have shown you sit atop a steam vent deep beneath the earth's surface. Keeping an eye on speed and pressure, you begin your job of drilling towards the center of the earth.

An enormous amount of heat is stored within the earth, and when molten rock moves about it creates hot springs and steam vents deep underground. This stored heat is referred to as geothermal energy. Geo means earth, thermal means heat, and people have figured out ways to generate electricity using geothermal energy.

Iceland, a small, volcanic island in the North Atlantic relies heavily upon geothermal energy, heating 89% of houses. The Pacific Northwest also has significant volcanic activity, and the geothermal industry is gaining significant popularity here in the United States. Drilling these wells requires specialized machinery, and the demand for workers in this business is high. A large number of jobs in this field are felon friendly, and if you consider yourself a hard worker with an interest in giving people environmentally friendly energy, you should consider the following career opportunities:

### CARPENTERS

Carpenters working in geothermal fields build, install and repair fixtures and parts made from wood or other materials, including plastic, fiberglass, and drywall, on geothermal construction sites. Often following construction drawings, carpenters are required to use hand and power tools, such as planes, saws, and drills to cut and shape the materials, which are joined using nails, screws, or other fasteners.

**Education:** Geothermal employers require applicants to have a high school diploma or equivalent. Credits earned as a part of an apprenticeship program usually counts toward an associate's degree.

**Training:** Most carpenters learn their trade through a three or four year apprenticeship. Upon finishing the apprenticeship, they are considered journey workers.

**Licenses/Certifications:** There are no specific licensing or certification requirements for Carpenters.

### Responsibilities:

- Follow blueprints and building plans.
- Install structures and fixtures.
- Construct building frameworks.
- Help erect, level, and install building framework with the aid of cranes.
- Inspect and replace damaged framework or other structures and fixtures.

### CARPENTERS

2020 Median Salary	\$40,000 to \$50,000
Entry-Level Education	High School Diploma or GED
On-the-job Training	Apprenticeship
Projected number of new jobs	10,000 to 49,999

\* Statistics according to the Bureau of Labor

### ELECTRICIANS

Electricians working in geothermal fields install and maintain energy systems within the geothermal plants. When constructing plants, Electricians reference their construction drawings to determine where to place equipment such as circuits and outlets. They install and connect wires to systems such as circuit breakers, transformers and outlets. Electricians also install the

### Article Sources

#### Clean Energy Jobs, Internships and Trainings:

A career planning resource which helps individuals find jobs and training opportunities in the clean energy field.

#### Renewable Energy Jobs:

A website dedicated to helping individuals find meaningful employment in the field of renewable energy.

#### Green Jobs & Career Pathways Guidebook by Raquel Pinderhughes, Ph.D.



**Careers in the Spotlight** - Geothermal Energy... (continued from previous page)

electrical equipment that connects the geothermal plant to the electrical grid. Geothermal Electricians must usually be familiar with computer systems that regulate the flow of electricity.

**Education:** Many geothermal employers require applicants to have a high school diploma or equivalent. Many technical schools offer programs focusing on circuitry and safety practices.

**Training:** Electricians often learn their trade via a four or five year apprenticeship program. Upon completing an apprenticeship program, Electricians are considered to be journey workers and may perform duties on their own, subject to any local licensing requirements. Because of this comprehensive training, electricians who complete apprenticeship programs qualify to do both construction and maintenance work.

**Licenses/Certifications:** Most states require Electricians to pass an exam and be licensed.

**Responsibilities:**

- Follow blueprints and diagrams.
- Install and maintain wiring, control, and lighting systems.
- Identify electrical problems.
- Repair and replace wiring, equipment, or fixtures.
- Direct and train workers to install, maintain, or repair electrical wiring or equipment.

ELECTRICIANS	
2020 Median Salary	\$40,000 to \$59,999*
Entry-Level Education	High School Diploma or GED
On-the-job Training	Apprenticeship
Projected number of new jobs	50,000 or more*
* Statistics according to the Bureau of Labor	

**PLUMBERS**

Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters working in geothermal fields install, maintain, and repair the pipe systems in geothermal plants that carry hot, high-pressure fluid from the thermal well and into low-pressure tanks. Plumbers are also responsible for the other pipes in the plant, including those that carry steam from the tanks to the turbines.

**Education:** Employers require applicants to have a high school diploma or equivalent. Many pipefitter and steamfitter apprenticeship training programs offer welding courses.

**Training:** Plumbers learn their trade through four or five year apprenticeship. Unions and Businesses offer apprenticeship programs.

**Licenses/Certifications:** Many states require Plumbers to be licensed, and require Plumbers to have two to five years of experience and to pass an exam that demonstrates their knowledge of the trade.

**Responsibilities:**

- Install pipes and fixtures.
- Study blueprints and follow state and local building codes.
- Inspect and test installed pipe systems and pipelines.
- Troubleshoot systems that are not working.
- Recognize and replace worn parts.

PLUMBERS	
2020 Median Salary	\$40,000 to \$59,999*
Entry-Level Education	High School Diploma or GED
On-the-job Training	Apprenticeship
Projected number of new jobs	10,000 to 49,999*
* Statistics according to the Bureau of Labor	

**For More Information**

AICs interested in learning more about Environmental Careers can sign up for the *Roots of Success* class.

*Roots of Success* is an Environmental Literacy course focused on informing AIC of global health issues and green collar jobs. This course is open to all incentive levels.

Contact IWP to apply.

# College Education

Increasing the Odds of Employment Upon Release

Written by Christian Reyes



Christian Reyes,  
Intern Writer, *The Echo*

Reyes is in the Internship Program at IWP. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor's in Business Administration.

Author's Choice:  
Top 3 Schools for AICs

## Adams State University

Extended Studies  
208 Edgemont Boulevard  
Alamosa, CO 81101  
[www.exstudies@adams.edu](mailto:www.exstudies@adams.edu)

## California Coast University

925 North Spurgeon St.  
Santa Ana, CA 92701  
[www.calcoast.com](http://www.calcoast.com)

## Colorado State University Pueblo

Division of Extended Studies  
2200 Bonforte Boulevard  
Pueblo, CO 81001  
[independentstudy@csupueblo.edu](mailto:independentstudy@csupueblo.edu)

Important Info

## Oregon Career Information System (Oregon CIS)

Database, found at [oregoncis.uoregon.edu](http://oregoncis.uoregon.edu), providing information on various employment fields and careers; including, education information, average wages, and projected job openings.

Pursuing postsecondary education is a great way to spend your time while incarcerated; however, many AICs struggle deciding what degree would be beneficial once they are released. Limited print-based correspondence programs and restrictions in certain professions have an impact on the degrees that can be pursued while incarcerated. Obtaining a college degree in prison has shown to increase the odds of post-release employment by 59%. Completion of a degree is worthwhile for those seeking to demonstrate positive behavior to the parole board, and develop fundamental skills for the workplace.

Before they decide on a degree program, AICs should verify there are no restrictions in employment or licensing in the industry they are pursuing. The number, recentness, or nature of a felony record are means to which licensing boards and employers may reject an applicant for a job position. Employees' rights vary by state. One should understand their employee rights by contacting the equal opportunity employment office of the state in which they'll parole.

At EOCI there is no Internet access for AICs. This does not restrict AICs from seeking credits in general education with the intent to transfer these credits after release. Check with the college that has the degree program of interest and ensure they will accept the credits for the courses completed from the previous institution.

Not all degrees are equal. In the United States colleges and universities award six types of degrees. The Associate's Degree reflects the full-time study of two years, traditionally at a community college. The four-year degree, known as the Bachelor's Degree, signifies a student has learned a significant amount of knowledge in a particular field of study. Master's, Doctorate and Professional Degrees show a significant understanding of one's field of study. These programs range from 5-8 years but

vary by university. Verify with the school counselor on requirements to complete each program.

Enrolling and completing a degree program is a commitment. Students should consider taking a single course or reading a college-level textbook on the subject prior to being admitted into a degree program. This will provide them insight onto whether they will stick it out in the long run. This can save a ton of time and money.

Employers may be looking for a certain level of degree or major of study. For example, a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering may not be suited for management position in a marketing company. This is not to say that there is a specific degree that has to be obtained for a job. A construction management company, for example, may consider applicants with a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration just as much as a Bachelor of Science in Construction Management. Utilize resources, like Oregon CIS, to determine what the typical education level is expected for the industry.

Generally, it takes AICs twice as long to complete their degree while incarcerated. An AIC should set a reasonable education goal based on the length of their sentence. If there is not enough time to complete the full degree program they should ensure completing their degree is in their release plan. Working with a school counselor is a good way of managing the amount of credits taken each semester and staying on track to complete the degree.

AICs interested in participating in correspondence courses should reach out directly to the colleges of their choice. Adams State University, California Coast University, and Colorado State University Pueblo are a few schools that AICs in Oregon have used in the past. Completed EOCI Correspondence Course Approval Request forms are required for all courses prior to enrollment.