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Top 5 College Correspondence Programs For Prisoners

In the realm of higher education, behind bars correspondence studies reign supreme. While traditional college students attend school in-person, and some even via internet technologies such as Blackboard, prisoners largely participate in higher education the very old fashioned way: through correspondence courses, where all communication between school and student is accomplished through the U.S. Mail.

A large problem for prisoners desiring to further their education is a lack of viable information on what correspondence programs are available to them. After all, American prisoners almost categorically lack access to the internet. As such, they often ask their loved ones and friends to search online for suitable educational offerings. That is where this article comes in.

Below you will find the top five college correspondence programs for prisoners. As a long-time incarcerated student, and holder of a bachelor's degree earned entirely through correspondence education while in prison, I have taken courses from many of these educational providers. These are the college correspondence course providers that I recommend for incarcerated students.

1. **Adams State University**

[Correspondence Education Program, Adams State University, 208 Edgemont Blvd., Suite 3000, Alamosa, CO 81101](#)

Adams State University's Prison College Program is my top pick by far. Regionally accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, ASU offers a plethora of certificates, associates and bachelors degrees, all of which are available entirely through correspondence education. Each course costs around \$500 and incarcerated students have 12 months to complete each. Currently certificates are available in paralegal studies and associates and bachelors degrees are offered in business, business administration, English/liberal arts, history, interdisciplinary studies, political science, and sociology. [Full Disclosure: I received my bachelor's degree from ASU.]

2. **Upper Iowa University**

[Upper Iowa University, P.O. Box 1857, Fayette, IA 52142-1857](#)

Upper Iowa University's Self-Paced Degree Program is a newer player in higher education for prisoners, but they make a bold statement. Regionally accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, they offer a large number of certificates, associates and bachelor degrees. Many of their courses can be completed entirely through the mail. The only draw is that their courses run just shy of \$1,000 each.

Incarcerated students have six months to complete each course, but can request a free six-month extension if needed. Certificates are offered in management and psychology, while associates and bachelors degrees are available in business, liberal arts, psychology, business administration, management, public administration, and social sciences.

3. Colorado State University at Pueblo

[2200 Bonforte Blvd, Pueblo, CO 81001-4901](#)

Colorado State University's Distance Education Program is another great option for incarcerated students, though their degree offerings are somewhat limited. Regionally accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, they offer bachelors degrees in social sciences and sociology. Each course runs around \$500 and students have six months to complete each. While the offerings aren't as extensive as Adams State University's, Colorado State University is a very well-respected institution of higher education for prisoners.

4. Ohio University

[Ohio University Correctional Education, 102 Haning Hall, 1 Ohio University, Athens OH 45701](#)

Ohio University's Correctional Education Program is also a great provider of correspondence courses for prisoners. Back in the 1990s, Ohio University was the hottest thing in prison education, but in the past several years they have slimmed down their course offerings. Regionally accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Ohio University offers several associates and bachelors degrees, though more limited than ASU and CSU. Courses run around \$1,000 each and students have eight months to complete each.

5. California Coast University

[925 N. Spurgeon Street, Santa Ana, CA 92701](#)

California Coast University is the wildcard of the batch. Not regionally accredited, which means that their courses might not transfer to other colleges and universities, CCU offers a surprisingly wide range of certificates, associates, bachelors, masters and doctorate degrees through the mail. Courses run around \$500 each. While any non-regionally accredited school that offers so many options immediately raises red flags in my mind, California Coast University does appear to be a legitimate university, albeit one with special distance learning focus.

Christopher Zoukis is the author of [College for Convicts: The Case for Higher Education in American Prisons](#) (McFarland & Co., 2014) and [Prison Education Guide](#) (Prison Legal News Publishing, 2016). He can be found online at [ChristopherZoukis.com](#), [PrisonEducation.com](#) and [PrisonLawBlog.com](#)



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Inmate Courses - Legal Assistant/Paralegal

Blackstone Career Institute makes every effort to accommodate the enrollment of incarcerated individuals in our Legal Assistant/Paralegal Career Training Program and [Advanced Paralegal Courses](#). We use soft-covered books and materials for ease of entry into most state prisons, federal penitentiaries, county jails, and other institutions.

Blackstone's Legal Assistant/Paralegal Career Training Program teaches students how to do legal research, help prepare legal cases for hearings and trials, and work with legal documents. Students will also learn how to perform an initial case analysis, research various legal topics, and draft legal documents.

- Prerequisite: High School or General Equivalency Diploma
- Study Method: Mail correspondence
- Program Length: Completion time ranges from 6-18 months, with students given the option of up to 24 months if needed. Students must satisfy all academic and financial obligations to graduate from their program.

Do you offer payment plans? What is tuition?

Our Correspondence Paralegal Program offers 3 payments plan options:

Plan A – Pay in Full – \$699

Plan B – \$59 Monthly Payments – \$59 down & 10 Low Monthly Payments of \$59, with a final payment of \$50

Plan C – \$30 Monthly Payments – \$59 down, 21 Low Monthly Payments of \$30, with a final payment of \$10

There are 14 volumes that are mailed to the student. The payment option you choose determines the frequency of shipments. Here are more details:

Plan A – Pay in Full – Three volumes are shipped to the student. Once the student completes the coursework in the first three volumes, the next set of 3 is shipped.

Plan B – \$59 Monthly Payments – One volume is shipped per each monthly payment received.

Plan C – \$30 Monthly Payments – One volume is shipped every two months per payment received.

Is it possible for an incarcerated student to find employment as a Paralegal?

We hear from many of our incarcerated graduates that they obtained paralegal positions once released. In fact, many have found positions with attorneys they met while incarcerated or during their court proceedings. Paralegal employment is up to the employer's discretion and also depends on the nature of the applicant's offense. You may be limited in your capacity to obtain certain positions within the federal and state government. In addition to having the knowledge that our program provides, you will need other skills that employers are looking for, such as professionalism and good verbal and written communication skills. Incarcerated individuals choose to take our paralegal program for various reasons. They realize the value of continuing their education, they want to become more knowledgeable in understanding their own case, or they want to show the parole board that they are working for positive change. Securing employment is possible. However, education is never a guarantee of employment, but it is certainly a step in the right direction.

How do I get my friend or loved one started in the Paralegal program?

You can enroll the student one of three ways:

- 1) Enroll Online, Anytime. Simply click [here](#)
- 2) Call our student center at 800.826.9228 to speak with a student representative
- 3) Request an enrollment agreement be mailed to the student. Simply click [here](#) to request information.