

Exploring the Experiences of Participants in Second Chance Pell: Student and Alumni Focus Group Characteristics Summary, Appendix B

From October 2021 to March 2022, the Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison conducted focus groups with 98 currently incarcerated students and seven formerly incarcerated alumni, all of whom participated or were participating in the Second Chance Pell Experiment. This Appendix provides demographic information about focus group participants for the following variables: race/ethnicity, first-generation student status, and first-time student status. For additional information about methodology, see Appendix A to this study.¹

These data were collected during focus groups. It is important to note that our research team did not recruit participants for the study. We relied upon state Departments of Corrections and prison higher education staff to identify participants. Thus, we cannot make claims about representation.

Representation among racial and ethnic groups varied by site. On average, white students comprised the greatest percentage of focus group participants (61.32%) across all sites. Black students accounted for a quarter (25.47%) of all participants. Across sites, American Indian students were significantly underrepresented in focus groups and Hispanic/Latinx students were significantly underrepresented at Sites A and B. Program staff selected participants for focus groups; it is likely that the same selection processes that skews white for prison higher education programs is exacerbated in the focus groups.

Table 1

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY RACE

Race/Ethnicity	Site A (N=22)	Site B (N=7)	Site C (N=56)	Site D (N=21)	Overall (N=106)
American Indian	0%	0%	1.79%	4.76%	1.89%
Asian	0%	28.57%	0%	0%	1.89%
Black	22.73%	28.57%	33.9%	4.76%	25.47%
White	68.18%	42.86%	55.36%	76.19%	61.32%
Hispanic	18.18%	0%	7.14%	4.76%	6.6%
Other/not listed	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unknown	0%	0%	9.52%	0%	1.89%

Among focus group participants who addressed such questions, the majority were first-generation (66%) and first-time (52%) college students. (Not all focus group participants addressed this question; percentages reflect the number of students who provided this information. At Site C, for example, of the 56 focus group participants, 16 revealed whether or not they were first generation college students. Of those 16, 75% were first generation college students). It is important to keep these numbers in mind regarding financial aid literacy. Students who were the first in their families to graduate from college or who had never enrolled in college before participating in the Second Chance Pell Experiment were less likely to have knowledge about federal student aid when they enrolled in the prison higher education program. It is therefore critical for program staff to provide students with clear and consistent information about federal student aid and why they are eligible or not for Pell Grants during incarceration.

Table 2

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFYING AS FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

	Site A (N=6)	Site B (N=7)	Site C (N=16)	Site D (N=18)	Overall (N=47)
First Generation Student	83%	28.57%	75%	66.67%	65.96%

Table 3

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFYING AS FIRST-TIME COLLEGE STUDENTS

	Site A (N=17)	Site B (N=7)	Site C (N=16)	Site D (N=20)	Overall (N=60)
First-Time College Student	35.29%	42.86%	41.18%	40%	51.67%

Suggested citation: Aguilar Padilla, E., Gaskill, S., & Castro, E. L. (2022, October 1). *Exploring the Experiences of Participants in Second Chance Pell: Student and Alumni Focus Group Characteristics Summary, Appendix B.* Salt Lake City, UT: Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison.

With support from Lumina Foundation



Endnotes

¹ Castro, E. L., Royer, C., Aguilar Padilla, E., & Gaskill, S. (2022, October 1). *Exploring the Experiences of Participants in Second Chance Pell: Methodology, Appendix A.* Salt Lake City, UT: Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison.