

PLENARY SESSION
RENO BALLROOM, CASINO LEVEL
Monday, January 9, 2017
8:30am – 10:00am

The Power of Higher Education for Students Under Community Supervision

Panelists: Andre Bethea, C. Jason Bell, Danny Murillo, and Janella Robinson

Moderator: Margaret diZerega

With the growth of postsecondary education programs—college courses and certificates—being offered in correctional facilities across the country, parole and probation agencies are coming into contact with a growing number of people returning from incarceration and continuing college in the community. While returning students require similar skill-building, pro-social activity participation, and supervision as their non-student counterparts, they will also benefit from community supervision officers who encourage them to continue with school or take their certification and apply it to a career. This session examines strategies probation and parole agencies can employ to help students achieve their educational goals while still meeting post-release objectives.

Andre Bethea is the policy advisor for corrections at the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance. Previously, Mr. Bethea served as the director for program operations and policy at the New York City Department of Correction (NYCDOC) where he managed external relationships with community-based organizations and research institutions, as well as developed policy/curriculum, identified best practices, and supervised programmatic initiatives for adolescents and young adults in custody. Mr. Bethea received his master’s degree in library and information science from Pratt Institute and his bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Jason Bell, is the regional director of Project Rebound and lecturer at San Francisco State University in sociology, criminal justice, and counseling. Mr. Bell has a rich history of working with the adult prison and jail population, but has taken on the rewarding responsibility of being a mentor to both adults and youth in and from the criminal legal system. He played a part in the establishment of the San Francisco Safe Communities Reentry Council. Mr. Bell is also a formerly incarcerated person himself. Mr. Bell has a bachelor’s degree in sociology and a master’s degree in counseling (college & rehabilitation).

Janella Robinson is the Michigan Department of Corrections Prisoner Reentry Administration prisoner reentry specialist for southeast Michigan. She has served as the current co-chair of the Wayne County Prisoner Reentry Steering Team since 2012 and adjunct faculty at Ferris State University. Ms. Robinson functions as an expert authority in the area of reentry programming and is responsible for the general oversight and day-to-day administration of prisoner reentry services and programs in Wayne County and Oakland County. Ms. Robinson obtained her bachelor’s degree in psychology from Howard University in Washington, D.C. and a master’s degree in criminal justice and security administration from the University of Phoenix.

Margaret diZerega, project director within the Center on Sentencing and Corrections at the Vera Institute of Justice, works on a range of projects related to family contact and families’ role in reentry. She manages Vera’s work on access to postsecondary education within corrections which includes providing technical assistance to the Second Chance Pell sites. In addition, Ms. diZerega has been working on the Family Reentry Pilot Program with the New York City Housing Authority and on criminal background policies for the Housing Authority of New Orleans. Ms. diZerega holds a bachelor’s degree in American studies from Williams College and a master’s in public administration from NYU’s Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.