

# PIECING TOGETHER A COLLEGE EDUCATION

Jon Marc Taylor, Missouri inmate

## 1 CHAPTER

### The Value of Higher Education

A college education is more important now than ever before. When Congress eliminated Pell Grants for prisoners several years ago, it resulted in a nearly complete shutdown of higher-education classes in prisons across the country. Today the only access most prisoners have to post-secondary education is through distance-learning programs or less well-known university “end-of-course” exams and the nearly secret equivalency tests. Prisoners are now looking to independent study courses, and many have done so with surprising success.

This four-part series will offer reasons to pursue a college education and explain how to speed up the pace of finishing a degree while cutting costs. It will examine how exams and credit bank schools can be combined to suit your academic interests, and how to put it all together with life-experience credits and correspondence courses. But first, a question: Why go to all the trouble?

#### Make the World a Better Place

A wise man once advised, “If you want to make the world a better place, begin by making yourself a better person.” To begin that process behind bars, you must start by reconstructing (or constructing for the first time) your self-worth. The devastation from a series of poor life choices is always made worse by the incarceration experience. Where will this reconstruction come from?

For many it begins with a change of heart, but the heart doesn’t exist alone.

To transport you on a journey of self-discovery and fruitful living, you must have an education. To function in today’s economy, which 95 percent of all inmates will eventually have to do again, a high school or general equivalency diploma (GED) is only a bare minimum. Earning a college degree will dramatically improve your job-qualifying power, bolster your earning potential, and equip you to successfully reenter society.

#### College Combats Recidivism

The most frequently cited value of postsecondary correctional education (PSCE) is that it lowers the likelihood of returning to prison (“recidivism”)—by a lot. Recidivism drops from 70 to 20 percent for ex-prisoners who have earned an associate (two-year) degree or more. The Appendix at the end lists two decades of PSCE recidivism studies reporting “statistically significant” reductions.

Dr. Robert Ross of the University of Ottawa analyzed prison college programs and summarized that “nowhere else in the literature of [correctional programming] can one find such impressive results with the recidivistic adult offender.”

#### Employment Boost

Parole officers identify unemployment as a prime factor in recidivism. Fewer than half of ex-offenders find steady employment when paroled. Every study that has looked at the issue found that 75 percent of collegeeducated ex-offenders find steady employment. The majority of jobs in today’s service economy require the skills of a collegeeducated person. Without a degree or at least some post-secondary course work, minimum-wage work is most likely the only option for ex-cons.

#### Earning Power

Only those who earn at least some college education or training are going to find

employment that supports a decent standard of living. For John Q. Citizen, the average annual rate of return on the money and time invested in four years of college is about 11 percent greater than for someone with no college degree. In 2000, the average annual salary for a worker with a bachelor’s (four-year) degree was \$30,000.

#### Benefits to Society

Post-secondary correctional education (PSCE) impacts not just you and your family, but the community as well. It leads to reduced crime (you’ve got a job now, remember) and therefore safer communities. Better educated workers provide greater productivity, which stimulates businesses and the larger economy. College educated workers’ incomes are far greater than those of high school grads, and that translates into more tax revenue for local, state, and federal governments. Not only that, but you’re no longer using taxpayer funds by sitting in a cell. Beyond these measurable benefits, the transforming effects of higher education produce more rational and informed citizens, who strengthen democracy.

#### The Power to Think

Regardless of the date you walk out of prison to freedom (or even if you never do), pursuing PSCE should improve your fundamental ability to think, analyze, and reason. It is a powerfully liberating tool that can never be taken from you. It can only be surrendered by your choice not to use those skills. Moreover, you’ll improve your self-confidence not just in the new things you learn, but also in the achievement of passing tests, completing courses, and ultimately earning that degree.

# 2 CHAPTER

## How to Afford a College Education on a Prison Salary

In the first chapter I wrote about the incredible value of obtaining post-secondary correctional education (PSCE), including the benefits to finding work, having better earning power, and boosting your self-confidence. But I can already hear the number one objection, “Sure that’s great, but I earn 12 cents a day! College might as well cost millions. Get real.”

Okay, let’s get real then. The biggest expense in earning a college degree is tuition. Presently, the average in-state undergraduate tuition fee is \$125 per credit hour. A two-year associate’s degree usually requires 60 hours. A four-year bachelor’s degree will generally require 120 credit hours. Tuition fees alone will run you \$7,500 for the associate’s degree and more than \$15,000 for a bachelor’s! And the pain doesn’t end there.

Besides several hundred dollars in incidental costs, such as enrollment, term registration, shipping and handling expenses, and graduation fees, there is the cost of textbooks. Books will be your second greatest expense while earning a degree in the joint. Expect to spend \$90 per course for the necessary texts and study guides. With 20 (three-hour) classes for an associate’s degree, and 40 courses for a bachelor’s, you can figure on spending an additional \$1,800 to \$3,600 for books.

Even with “room and board” and medical expenses (such as they are) covered by Uncle Sam, earning a degree through correspondence will cost \$9,000 to \$20,000. Not a problem for those with sugar daddies or deep stashes. For the rest of us, it’s going to come down to hustle and creativity. I did it, and so can you. I will show you that it is possible to attain a degree for under \$5,000. Admittedly, not chump change in the pen, but it is possible to finance if you spread it out over years. And one thing we have lots of is time. We might as well make it work for us.

### Save by Testing Out

The routine for college on the outside usually goes like this: All freshmen and sophomores attend the same introductory or core classes (English, math, history, etc.). They sit through a semester of lectures and labs, and cram hard for final exams. Juniors and seniors attend classes that have to do with their major (journalism, economics, medicine). After two to six years, voila! You have a degree. Prisoners could do this, too, until Pell Grants disappeared and most classroom opportunities vanished. So how do we earn those costly credit hours?

Thousands of colleges and universities in North America grant credit toward their degree programs based on various “testing services.” These tests represent the final exam in a particular college course. Passing the test with a high enough score earns you the same credit as if you had taken the entire course at full cost. For one-tenth of the expense and a month of intensive study, you can earn college credits that will count toward virtually any degree program you choose. You can earn 75 percent of a degree using this method and save thousands of dollars.

### Testing Services

Three major testing service providers (CLEP, DANTES, and Regent College Examinations) offer equivalency tests, but each college or university sets its own policy as to what it will accept. Before you rush out and pay precious bucks for these tests, ask your school of choice the following: a) What exam services will it accept and in what subjects? b) What scores are needed to earn equivalent credit? c) If accepted, do such credits allow you to skip one or more introductory courses? d) Are there any additional requirements before credit is granted?

The three major services offer testing at centers all over the country on many dates during the year. All have procedures to cover institutionalized individuals (us). You’ll need to coordinate with your education office to take the easily proctored tests.

More than 2,800 colleges and universities recognize the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP, see Appendix). It is probably the most respected and accepted testing service. The 100-year-old College Entrance Examination Board backs it. More than four million students have utilized the

CLEP program. These are challenging and comprehensive exams. Credit is earned only if you can demonstrate concentrated subject knowledge.

CLEP exams offer five General Exams and 29 Subject Exams. The General Exams cover material taught in courses that most students take as requirements in the first two years of college. The 90-minute tests (except for English Composition with an essay) are entirely multiple-choice. Up to six semester hours of credit (worth about \$900) can be awarded for passing scores. The same is true of Subject Exams, but you can earn many more credits, sometimes up to 12 hours.

DSST or DANTES Subject Standardized Test is a nationally recognized program originally developed for military personnel (thus the acronym Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support). More than 80,000 individuals take DSST tests annually. You can choose from 37 titles in areas of social science, business, math, applied technology, humanities, and physical science. DSSTs are untimed, multiple-choice tests with no scoring penalty for guessing (see Appendix).

Excelsior College Examinations (formerly known as ACT-PEP exams) have been offered for 30 years and are accepted by nearly 1,000 colleges and universities. The 42 multiple-choice, essay, and mixed-format exams cover arts and sciences, business, education, and nursing. Excelsior can be up to three times more expensive than the other testing services, but offers a diversity of upper-level courses and nursing specialty exams and provides testing options that the others do not. It is worth considering for junior and senior students or those only a few credits short of graduating.

### Your Exam Strategy

Still sound expensive and complicated? How are you going to study for these hard tests without a college library? Thought you would never ask. It’s about teamwork and persistence. Let’s say you have picked a college degree plan, found out what tests the college accepts and for how many credits, and now you’re ready to begin testing out of as many classes as you can. Where do you start?

First, save yourself some irksome fees from the get-go. The testing services have fee waiver programs for “special situation” individuals (that’s us!). But be ready to hustle. The testing services have limited budgets for such exemptions. They are first-come, first-served. So if you miss out this year, try again early next year when they have a fresh budget.

If you’re going to pass any of these tests, you’re going to need some books and study guides. Each of the services offers free fact sheets and study guides along with sample questions. CLEP (\$18) and Excelsior College (\$18.95) offer comprehensive study guides covering more than 30 exams with sample questions, test-taking tips, answer rationales for multiple-choice tests, procedures for getting university credit, and study resource recommendations.

The recommended study resources are where you can save even more money with some creativity. Each study guide suggests six texts that cover the exam’s material. First, check your prison library. Many libraries collect college texts. If they don’t, start requesting that they acquire them. Suggest the titles listed in your study guides. Second, once newer editions of these texts are issued (about every three years), the previous editions are deeply discounted by the publisher. For a few bucks you can pick them up from close-out catalogs. Don’t worry, they still cover most of the material you need to know. Also ask your librarian to order preparation guides with full-length sample tests. CLEP and DSST alone have more than 100 free study guides.

Third, working through your librarian, form a committee and write to area colleges seeking donations of department and professional discarded texts. The inmates at Indiana State Reformatory built, cost free, a multi-thousand-volume reference library using this strategy. Finally, see if you can get some fellow prisoners to pool their resources and learn together. You can all share the texts and pay less per person. Remember to take the sample tests and see how you’re doing before you pay money to take the real test. If you think you’re ready, go for it. If you fail to earn a passing score the first time around, you can retake the same test in six months. Never give up. Never surrender your future.

## 3 CHAPTER

### Earning College Credit for What You Already Know

While credit-equivalency exams are a great value, they will not meet all the requirements necessary for most degree programs. As mentioned in Chapter 2, these exams can take you, at most, 75 percent of the way there. To get the rest of the way, you’ll have to earn course credits another way.

The traditional way to fulfill these last few class requirements would be to enroll in a correspondence course, submit 12 or so lessons, and take, on average, two proctored exams. This option will be covered in the next chapter. But in keeping with the strategy of piecing together your college degree as cheaply as possible, let’s look at three other possible routes first.

#### End-of-Course Exams

End-of-course exams, also called “Credit-by-Examinations,” are similar to CLEP and DANTES exams, except that credits are earned for specific colleges. The exams are nearly the same as those used in a regular correspondence course, but they are much cheaper and less time-consuming. Typically, the expense is from one-third to one-half what traditional per-credit-hour enrollment costs.

You can enroll in these courses, purchase the study guide, syllabus, and tests, and schedule your end-of-course exams when you’re ready. There are no assignments or midterms to complete. You study to pass a single end-of-course exam. Most students select a class based on prior knowledge in the subject, as well as a needed transcript credit.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, purchase used text-books if possible, look for similar books on your library shelves, and take the same course with some buddies, splitting the material fees. Consider donating any new books and study guides to your library for others who will come after you.

Many colleges offer end-of-course exams even if they do not clearly state it in their catalogs. If it’s not clear, request in writing

what they do offer. Two schools that have extensive choices (well over 100) are Ohio University and the University of North Carolina.

#### Prior Learning

Prior learning, also called “experiential learning” or “life-work experience,” can save you time and money in your quest to earn a college degree. Prior learning is the academic world’s recognition of students who accumulate work experience and life knowledge that can be assessed and accredited. Today, more than 1,000 schools offer Prior Learning Assessment (PLA).

PLA operates on the principle that what students know is more important than how they learned it. If students can demonstrate that their existing knowledge or skills are reasonably comparable to those of college-trained students, then they get credit. You can earn this credit by preparing a record that summarizes and documents your knowledge.

Not all life-learning can be converted into college credit, but you may be surprised by how much you already know is credit worthy. There are seven major categories that may yield college-equivalent credit:

#### 1. Work:

skills and activities performed on the job, including military service, homemaking, maintenance, budgeting, cooking, and nutrition

#### 2. Volunteer work:

church activities, political campaigns, service organizations such as Jaycees and Toastmasters

#### 3. Non-credit learning in formal settings:

business training courses, clinics, conferences, lectures and workshops

#### 4. Travel:

tours, business trips, significant vacations, living abroad

#### 5. Recreational activities and hobbies:

acting/community theater productions, arts & crafts, aviation training, landscaping, musical skills

#### 6. Independent reading-viewing-listening:

extensive self-directed study

#### 7. Conversations with experts

(see Appendix)

To receive credit for these experiences, you must construct a Prior Learning Portfolio, a document justifying and documenting your request for college-equivalent credits. Preparing a portfolio is not an easy task, but it can be well worth the effort. Some schools provide instructions on how to compose your portfolio. Others require that you take an actual class on portfolio preparation. The Appendix gives you one good source of information.

Portfolios have four parts: 1) a request for specific course credits; 2) a résumé identifying your education, professional and other relevant activities; 3) a narrative demonstrating that you have “college-equivalent” knowledge and skills; and 4) documentation to support your claims of accomplishment.

It is crucial to document your experiences. An assessment team at the schools you apply to will evaluate your portfolio. Some criteria used to evaluate your portfolio include your decision-making responsibility, the number and kind of reporting relationships you had with subordinates and colleagues, the span of financial control you held, and the duration of your training experiences. Schools and the American Council on Education (ACE) are striving to create “menus” on uniform credit award for nontraditional experiences (see Appendix). ACE publishes two massive books making such recommendations: *The National Guide to Educational Credit for Training Programs* and *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces*. Urge your education director to order these reference guides for your library.

Many colleges and universities offer portfolio credit evaluations. The number of credits possible range from a few to more than 100. Evaluation fees vary among colleges. On average the cost is \$30 to \$60 per credit hour. It may sound like more money, but it’s far cheaper than signing up to take the course from scratch.

### Credit Bank Schools

Schools that have unrestricted transfer and portfolio credit-granting policies are called Credit Bank Services. These fully accredited schools work like a money bank accepting deposits of academic credits, however or wherever earned, issuing a single widely recognized transcript. These schools also offer a wide variety of degree programs.

Among the three listed colleges (see Appendix) they offer more than 200.

There are seven categories of learning experiences that can be deposited in credit bank accounts. These credit sources can be mixed and matched to fulfill a majority, and in some cases all, of the hours necessary to complete a degree’s requirements. Here are the categories: classroom or correspondence college courses, equivalency exams, military training and experience, ACE-accredited industry training programs, FAA pilot certifications and licenses, nursing performance exams, and all other life experiences combined in a portfolio assessment. For students with diverse training and life experiences, credit-banking services may be the best investment you make.

Fees vary. Portfolio assessment fees range from \$250 to \$600. Maintenance fees of your service records average another \$100 every year. Obviously, it’s best to wait until you have accumulated enough total hours before you apply for a portfolio assessment. That way you will avoid the annual maintenance fees. For those directly seeking a degree (not using credit-banking services), the Charter Oak State College Foundation offers grants for courses, tests, and portfolio assessment fees. Apply quarterly and early for this generous waiver program.

When all fees are totaled, for those able to submit credit deposits of 120 academic certifiable hours or more, a bachelor’s degree can cost about \$1,500—quite a savings over the initially projected cost of \$15,000 for a degree earned via correspondence. As Marcus Garvey remarked, “According to the commonest principles of human action, no man will do as much for you as you will do for yourself.”

## 4 CHAPTER

### The Art of Picking College or University

For any prisoner, pursuing a higher education is an arduous task, specifically because of all the rules, regulations, and policies imposed by the prison system and the schools that offer distance learning. Although you may have to face many masters, you can do it if you stay focused. Let’s take it one step at a time.

The first task is to collect and review your institution’s policies regarding distance-education enrollments as well as associated regulations, such as personal property restrictions. You have to work within these parameters, so you might as well find out what they are and avoid running into them later. Contact your prison education supervisor for any assistance or advice he or she can provide. This person can be your best ally, smoothing out the inevitable glitches or your worst bureaucratic nightmare.

### Selecting a School and Curriculum

Next, you have to decide what you’re going to study and where. You may wish to graduate from a school in your home state, or the one with your favorite sports team, or the one where dear old mom and dad graduated. You may want to study music, science, or languages. Whatever your motives, consider the following before you decide.

Distance-education students have the responsibility to design their curriculum to fulfill the degree requirements. To figure out what courses to take to meet those requirements, you first have to know what kind of a degree you’re shooting for and where you plan to earn it. Selecting a college or university encompasses more than just the degree program the school offers. As recommended earlier in the series, find out the tuition fee per course hour, how many transfer credit hours they permit toward the degree you are considering (the more the better), and whether, and how much, they accept Equivalence Exams and portfolio credits.

There are two basic kinds of undergraduate degrees: Associate of Arts or Sciences (two-year degree requiring 60 to 70 credit hours), and Bachelor of Arts or Sciences (four-year degree requiring 120 to 130 credit hours). The associate’s degree provides a basic training in fields such as advanced automotive or computer applications. A bachelor’s degree is built on the foundation of an associate degree and focuses on a major, and often a minor, area of study, such as engineering or political science.

After completing 180 credit hours personally, and observing hundreds of other prisoner students, I recommend taking as many diverse types of courses as possible within your limited circumstances and degree plan.

All schools provide curriculum counselors. Be sure to use their services and have their approval for your chosen curriculum. See Appendix for a sample curriculum plan.

As discussed earlier in the series, no matter how many Equivalency Exam and life-experience portfolio credits you take to save money, you are still going to have to take five to ten correspondence courses (three credit hours each) from the college where you are seeking your diploma.

Actually, this is a good thing. There is nothing quite as satisfying in prison as successfully earning a grade in a college course. The enhanced self-respect you get from overcoming all obstacles is like no other (other than perhaps winning your pro se written brief before the Supreme Court!).

The Appendix lists some “best buy” schools I’ve researched and show the effective rates (ER) for tuition, which include all administrative, registration, and tuition expenses averaged across all their course offerings. Obviously, tuition rates increase every year, but these effective rates are close and give you an idea of what those five to ten courses will cost you.

### What Is Accreditation?

In selecting a school we haven’t mentioned an important criteria—accreditation. A recognized accrediting agency assures a student that the school has met certain standards concerning the quality of education, faculty, appropriate text and materials, and financial stability. Earning course credits at one accredited school generally ensures the transferability of those classes to another school (assuming the new school’s degree rules permit). For example, let’s say you earned six credit hours through an end-of-course exam and felt great because you saved a bundle. So you try to get your degree-granting school to accept those credits toward your degree. Then you find out those six credits came from a non-accredited school. You’re out of luck. You’ll have to retake those credits from an accredited institution before they will count. So find out before you spend the money to earn credits anywhere.

But you can rest assured that your credits and degree will be recognized if you choose a school that has been accredited by one of the following agencies: Distance Education and Training Council, Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Schools and Colleges, Northwest Association of Schools and

Colleges, Southern Association of Schools and Colleges, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges. If your school is not accredited by one of these agencies, then “buyer beware” should be your motto.

### Pulling It All Together

Your entire degree plan rests in your hands. No one will do it for you. It’s up to you to go after those life-experience credits, seek out the help of your education supervisor, study the free study guides to prepare for cheaper equivalency exams, line up the costs, and navigate the obstacles. It will take determination, creativity, and self-motivation. You’ll need to establish good study habits. Set a regular time and place to study (when everyone else on the block is out to recreation is a great time free of distractions). Block out the range roar by learning to concentrate with headphones on. Set deadlines. Schedule your coursework over several months and give yourself a realistic time to complete it. Many exam questions are drawn from assignment questions, so keep those graded assignments handy (don’t get caught having to clean it out because of cell restrictions).

Remember, earning a bachelor’s degree right from your cell is possible if you use a combination of all the cost-saving tips in this series. There is always a way to piece together your college education from behind bars.

## Appendix

### Post-Secondary Correctional Education Recidivism Studies

- 1974** Burlington County College of New Jersey prison college program: 10-percent recidivism rate compared with 80-percent national rate.
- 1976** Alexander City State Junior College prison college program: 16-percent recidivism rate compared with 70- to 75-percent national rate.
- 1979** State Correctional Institution Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania PSCE: Inmate students with the highest risk of recidivism experienced a statistically significant reduction in recidivism when compared with the control group of 108 variables.
- 1980** Texas Department of Correction Treatment Directorate: “Participation in the junior college program definitely results in lower recidivism rates.”

**1981** University of Victoria of Canada prison college program: 14-percent recidivism rate compared with 52 percent of matched group.

**1983** Folsom prison college program: 0-percent baccalaureate program recidivism rate compared with 24-percent standard first-year recidivism rate.

**1983** New Mexico State Penitentiary college program: 11-percent recidivism rate compared with 68-percent overall recidivism rate.

**1990** Lorton Prison of the District of Columbia college program: 6-percent recidivism rate compared with 40-percent average.

**1991** New York DOC Services PSCE programs: 26-percent recidivism rate compared with 44-percent overall rate.

**1994** From the study Recidivism Among Federal Prisoners Released in 1987: 5 percent earning college degrees compared with 40 percent overall.

**1995** Recidivism rates of various degree levels from a Texas DOC Windham School District analysis: associate’s—13.7 percent, bachelor’s—5.6 percent, master’s—0 percent.

### Post-Secondary Correctional Education Recidivism Studies

**RCLEP Program Administrator**  
PO Box 6605  
Princeton, NJ 08541  
(Exams \$70)

**DANTES Program Office**  
P-166  
ETS  
Princeton, NJ 08541  
(Exams \$70 + administration fee)

**Excelsior College Test Administration**  
7 Columbia Circle  
Albany, NY 12203  
(Exams between \$60 and \$240 per exam)

**Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)**  
PO Box 955  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
(Exams \$115)

## Courses for Which CLEP Exams Can Offer Credit

Most students are required to pass these subjects in their first two years of college: English Composition, Humanities, College Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences & History. Depending on your school's CLEP policy, satisfactory scores on all five of these 90-minute exams can earn you up to a year of college credit.

Passing one or more of the following 90-minute tests can prove to the school of your choice that you've mastered that subject at the college level.

### Business

Information Systems & Computer Applications  
Principles of Management  
Principles of Accounting  
Introductory Business Law  
Principles of Marketing

### Composition & Literature

American Literature  
Analysis & Interpretation Literature Freshman  
College Composition  
English Literature

### History & Social Sciences

American Government  
American History I: Early Colonization to 1877  
History of United States II: 1865 to present  
Human Growth and Development

### Science & Mathematics

Calculus with Elementary Functions  
College Algebra  
General Biology  
General Chemistry

### Foreign Languages

College-level French  
College-level German  
College-level Spanish

## Sample DANTES Fact Sheet/Study Guide Questions

In the northern hemisphere, the vernal equinox is the position occupied by the Sun on the first day of A) summer, B) fall, C) spring, D) winter

Which of the following is the best illustration of Newton's third law? A) A skater coasting across the ice, B) The spinning of a top, C) The swinging of a pendulum, D) The recoil of a shotgun

Which of the following planets has been observed to have extensive Van Allen belts similar to those on Earth? A) Mercury, B) Mars, C) Jupiter, D) Venus

## Two Schools Offering End-of-Course Exams

### Ohio University

Office of Independent Study  
Tupper Hall 302  
Athens, OH 45701-2979

### The William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Campus Box 1020  
100 Friday Center Drive  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-1020

## Examples of Possible Credit-Worthy Activities

Playing tennis  
Leading a church group  
Taking a body-building class  
Reading War and Peace  
Building model airplanes  
Learning shorthand  
Watching public television  
Playing in a band  
Living in another culture  
Repairing a car  
Designing or weaving a rug  
Devising a marketing strategy

## Portfolio Preparation Guidance

### Earn Credit for What You Know by Lois Lamdin (\$24.95 + S&H)

Council for Adult & Experiential Learning  
55 East Monroe Street – Suite 1930  
Chicago, Illinois 60603

## Credit-Worthy Documentation

Official commendations, course outlines, bills of sale, awards and honors, copies of speeches given, copies of exams taken, samples of arts and crafts, designs and blueprints, certificates, testimonials and endorsements, newspaper articles, official job descriptions, military records, writing samples, licenses, works of art

## Selected Examples of Standardized Awards

Alcohol and drug counseling (6 credits)  
Apprentice program—  
plumbing, pipe fitting (43 credits)  
Basic life-guarding (Red Cross) (1 credit)  
Computer electronic technical program (17 credits)  
Fluency in Spanish (4 credits)  
9400 copier repair course (Xerox Corp) (2 credits)

## Credit Bank Services & Degree-Granting Schools

Charter Oak State College 55 Paul J. Manafort Drive New Britain, CT 06053

Thomas Edison State College 101 West State Street Trenton, NJ 08608

## Sample Curriculum Plans

### Associate of Art's Degree

Basic College Skills (6 hours)  
Arts & Humanities (12 hours)  
Natural Sciences (9 hours)  
Social Sciences (12 hours)  
Mathematics (6 hours)  
English & Communications (9 hours)  
Electives (9 hours)

### Bachelor of Art's Degree

Basic College Skills (9 hours)  
Humanities (9 hours)  
Physical Sciences (6 hours)  
Mathematics (6 hours)  
English & Communications (12 hours)  
Social Sciences (15 hours)  
Foreign Languages (Spanish) (6 hours)  
Electives (9 hours)  
Major Field of Study (English) (48 hours)

## Tuition "Best Buy" Schools (information current as of 2008)

Louisiana State University  
Office of Independent study  
E106 Pleasant Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803 ER:  
\$80 per credit hour

Sam Houston State University  
Correspondence Division  
PO Box 2536  
Huntsville, TX 77341  
ER: \$80 per credit hour

Southwest Texas State University  
Office of Correspondence Studies  
302 Academic Services Building - North  
601 University Drive  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
ER: \$161 per credit hour

Texas A&M University Commerce  
Guided Independent Study  
PO Box 3011  
Commerce, TX 75429  
ER: \$236 per credit hour

University of Arkansas Global Campus  
2 East Center Street  
Fayetteville, AR 72701  
ER: \$99.99 per credit hour  
(Arkansas resident),  
\$105.25 per credit hour  
(non-Arkansas resident)

University Central Arkansas  
Division Continuing Education  
201 Donaghey Avenue  
Conway, AR 72035  
ER: \$161 per credit hour

**Degree Granting “Best Buy” Schools  
(information current as of 2008)**

Life Pacific College  
School of Distance Learning  
1100 West Covina Blvd.  
San Dimas, CA 91773  
Associate of Arts (64 hours)  
ER: varies

Ohio University  
College Program for the Incarcerated  
Hanning Hall 222  
Athens, OH 45701  
ER: \$136 per credit hour

Taylor University  
Center for Lifelong Learning  
1025 West Rudisill Blvd.  
Fort Wayne, IN 46807  
ER: \$221 per credit hour

Taylor University  
Center for Lifelong Learning  
1025 West Rudisill Blvd.  
Fort Wayne, IN 46807  
ER: \$221 per credit hour

Texas Tech University  
Outreach & Extended Study  
PO Box 42191  
Lubbock, TX 79409  
ER: \$144 per credit hour

Jon Marc Taylor received the Robert F. Kennedy and Nation/I.F. Stone Journalism awards for his reporting on “Pell Grants for Prisoners” and is author of Prisoners’ Guerrilla Handbook to Correspondence Programs in the U.S. and Canada. He earned his Master of Arts degree while incarcerated in Missouri. He is still in prison.

