



Bowie State University's Prison Education Program

**Annual Report
AY 2024-2025**

Bowie State University Prison Education Program History

As Maryland's first historically Black public University, Bowie State University empowers a diverse population of students to reach their potential by providing innovative academic programs and transformational experiences as they prepare for careers, lifelong learning, and civic responsibility. Bowie's Prison Education Program (BPEP) is an extension of our responsibility as an HBCU to empower Black people and other diverse and marginalized groups by not simply providing educational opportunities but an ecosystem of support and a culture of community, social justice, and change.

In 2020, the Department of Education designated Bowie State University as a Second Chance Pell Grant Awardee through their Experimental Site Initiative, which allows incarcerated individuals the opportunity to receive Federal Pell Grants to participate in postsecondary education and training programs. In the spring of 2024, BPEP becomes the first Maryland university to be approved by the Maryland Advisory Committee on Prison Education Programs (MACPEP) to offer a Prison Education Program (PEP) under the newly reinstated federal Pell Grant program. BSU is the first Historically Black College or University (HBCU) to offer a college program in a Maryland state prison.

Bachelor of Science in Sociology

The Bachelor of Science in Sociology is a 120-credit hour degree program that focuses on liberal arts education. Including in the 120 credit hours are 46-47 general education courses (English, Math, Arts/Humanities, Natural Sciences and History), 36 credit hours in Sociology Core Requirements courses and 38 Free Electives. All of the 120 credit hours will be offered at Jessup Correctional Institute as part of the prison education program (note: transfer credits will be accepted from all accredited universities and colleges). All courses are three credits apart from BIOL 101 (4 credits), and all courses will be offered in either 16-week or 8-week formats.



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AY 2024-2025 Executive Team

Executive Director

Charles B. Adams, Ph.D.

Director of Operations

Anthony J. Jackson, Ph.D.

Program Assistant

Britany Gatewood, Ph.D.

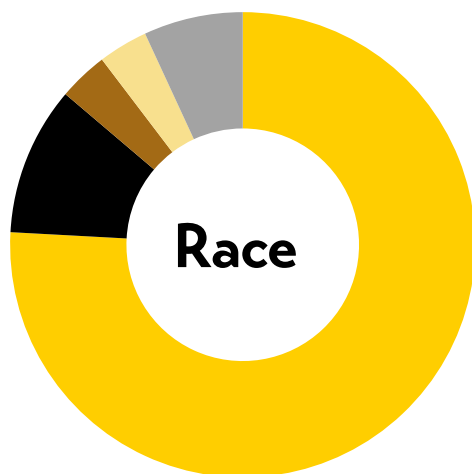
Site Coordinator

Ron Garrett, D.Min.

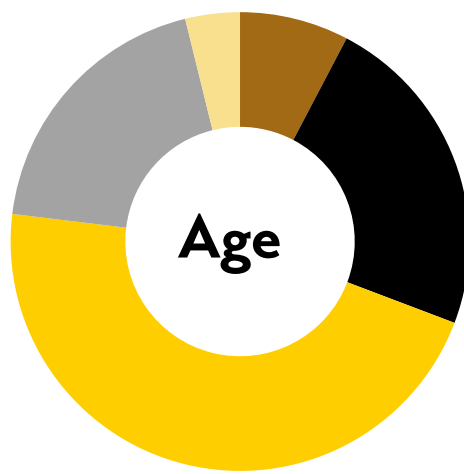


Participant Demographics

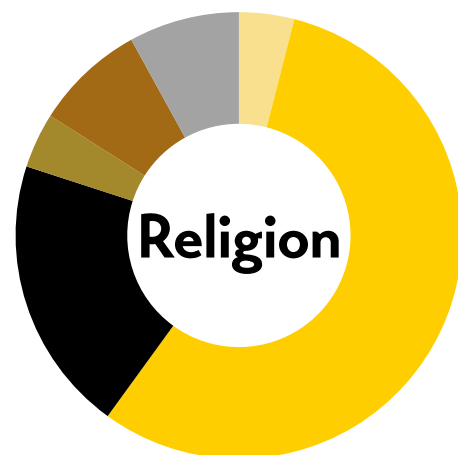
The AY 2024-2025 began with 31 students, however 2 students were released, 1 student transferred facilities, 1 could not continue because of health, and 1 decided to leave the program. There 26 students within BPEP as of May 30, 2025. The following demographics are for those 26 students. The majority of our students are Black, between 31-50, fathers, have a sentence of 11-25 years, and are from Maryland.



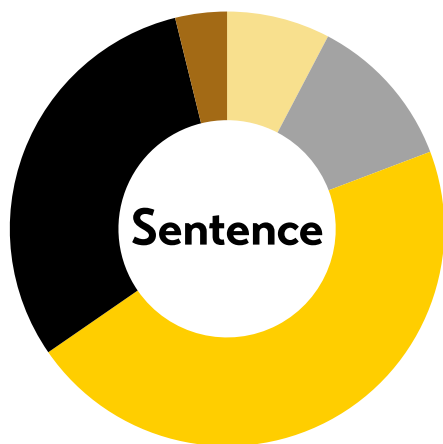
Black (22) White (3)
Pacific Islander (1) Other (1)
No data (2)



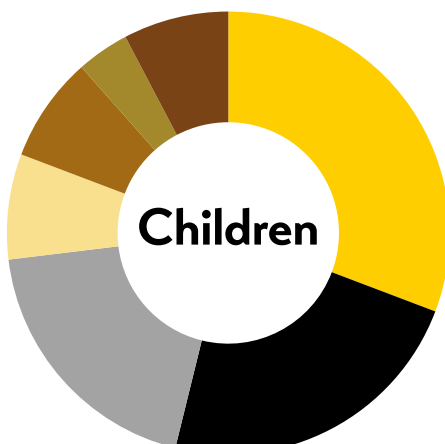
<30 (2) 31-40 (6)
41-50 (12) 51-60 (5)
No Data (1)



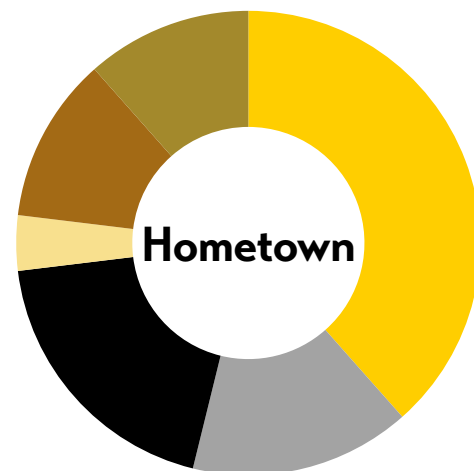
Athesist (1) Christian (14)
Muslim (5) Islam (1)
No particular practice (2) No Data (2)



<5 years or less (2) 6-10 Years (3)
11-25 Years (12) 26+ (8)
No data (1)

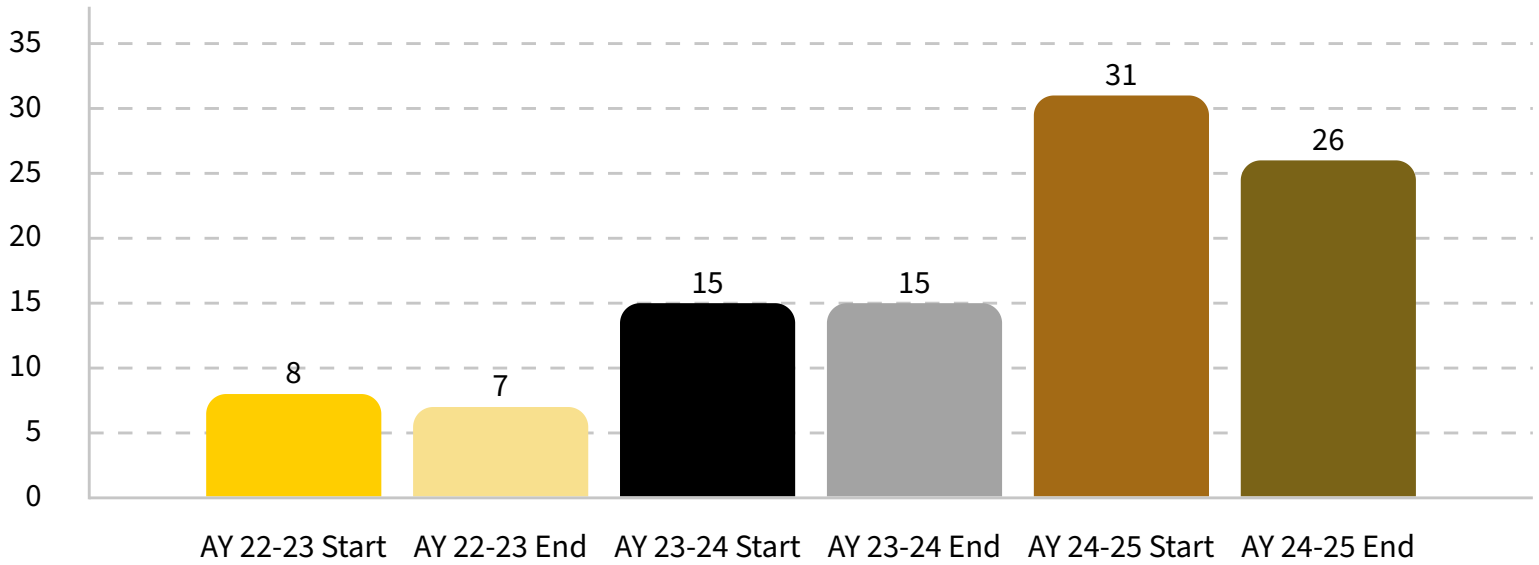


0 (8) 1 (6)
2 (5) 3 (2)
4 (2) 5+ (1)
No Data (2)

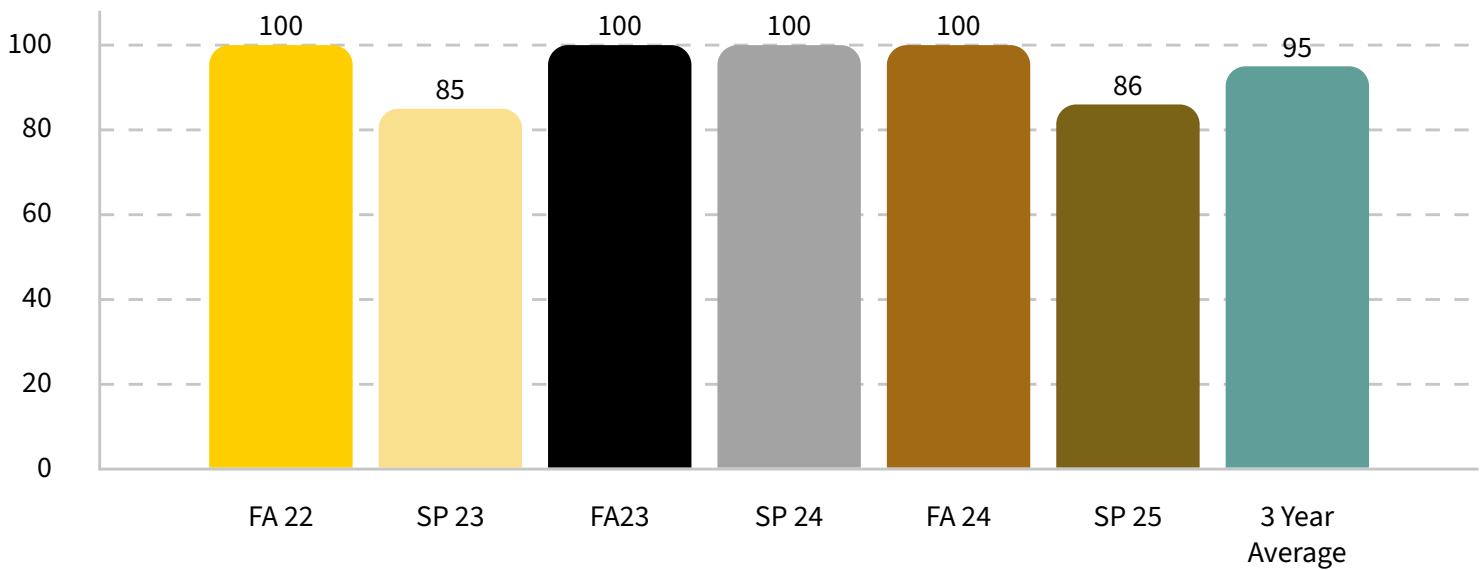


Baltimore, MD (10) Washington, DC (4)
Other Cities in Maryland (5) Virginia (1)
Outside of DMV (3) No Data (3)

Number of Students Enrolled



% Course Completion Rate



Each year the program grows. BPEP does a cohort model with a new cohort starting each fall semester. The majority of the students that are in BPEP stay in the program until they are released or transferred facilities. One student has voluntarily withdrew from the program. In AY 22-23 (1) student was released and in AY 24-25 2 students were released, (1) transferred facilities, (1) could not continue due to health, and (1) voluntary left the program. Overall BPEP has a 81% retention rate, which is higher than BSU's rate at 70%.*

*<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/institution-profile/162007>



of classes taught



credits earned



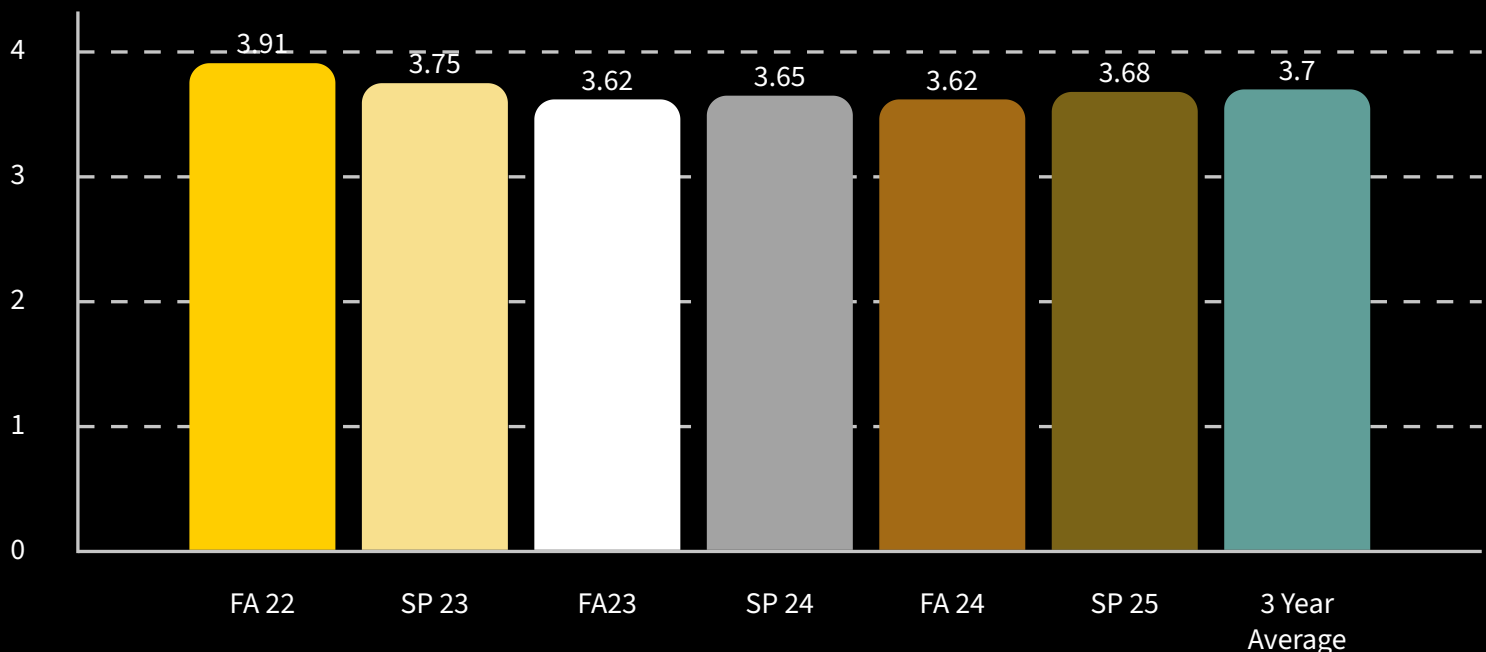
% student with a
cumulative 4.0



% students 3.5
GPA or higher

Students within BPEP have consistently shown their academic prowess. The average GPA of BPEP students exceed that of BSU students overall. The GPA of the BPEP students also exceeds the average GPA of sociology students with a similar class standing. The majority of students have a 3.5 GPA or higher. The Dean's list, which recognize students with a 3.5 or higher, is a consistent recognition for our students. Over the 3 years of the program 87% of the students have been on the Dean's list at least one time.

Average GPA By Term



Inaugural HBCU Prison Education Summit

This summit brought together HBCU leaders, policymakers, advocates, and community partners to build a Prison-to-HBCU Pipeline, expanding access to higher education for justice-impacted individuals and advancing racial equity for Black and historically marginalized communities.



The mission of the HBCU Prison Education Summit is to build a Prison-to-HBCU Pipeline. This pipeline will establish a network of Historically Black Colleges and Universities that provide justice impacted individuals—incarcerated and formally incarcerated—with access to higher education, holistic reentry services, and opportunities for personal and professional development. By building this network, we aim to empower HBCUs to better serve our community through prison education, to advance racial equity for Black people, to use access to higher education to create pathways for upward mobility, reduce recidivism, and break the cycle of incarceration. Our mantra is, educate to liberate and vow to transform (ELVT) the lives our people and thus all people.

See our website for more details and conference report.

One of the most powerful and moving moments of the summit was The Veil: Student-Led Plenary on Prison Education, featuring currently incarcerated students enrolled in Bowie State University's Prison Education Program. Named in reference to W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of "the veil," the session gave students the opportunity to reflect on the metaphysical and material barriers of incarceration and how education helps them navigate, resist, and rise above them. With raw insight and intellectual clarity, panelists shared their journeys through education inside prison walls, the challenges they face, and their dreams for the future.

What made this session especially impactful was the centering of HBCU education—an education rooted in a legacy of resistance, affirmation, and transformation for Black students. Panelists emphasized how being educated within an HBCU framework, even while incarcerated, instills a deep sense of pride, identity, and purpose. HBCU prison education offers not only academic instruction, but cultural grounding and community connection that empower students to see themselves as scholars, leaders, and agents of change.

PANELISTS

Ryan Samuel
David Jefferson-Smith
Lawrence Trolan
James Dixon

The Veil: Student-led Plenary on Prison Education

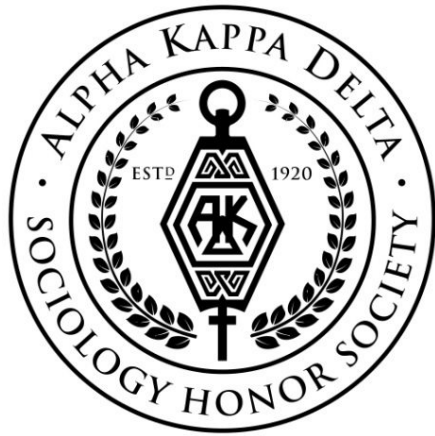




Black History Month 2025

The BPEP annual Black History Month Event's theme for 2025 was "Breaking Chains, Building Futures: Education, Resilience, and Liberation." Students and student groups from BSU's main campus were invited to perform musical, theatrical, and dance selections for our BPEP students inside of the facility. The BSU Choir sang several songs including "Lift Every Voice" and "Ease On Down the Road." The BSU Theater students did a scene from a play and even an improv scene which used crowd participation. The Mayhem Madness Step also did a step routine. Each cohort from BPEP also did a performance/speech on what Black History Means to them.

AY 2024-2025 Highlights



Alpha Kappa Delta Social Justice Award

In December 2024, the Bowie State University Prison Education Program was honored to receive the Alpha Kappa Delta Social Justice Award to support the development of *The Veil*, a semesterly student-led anthology style journal. Rooted in W.E.B. Du Bois's metaphor of the "Veil" as a symbol of racialized exclusion and double consciousness, *The Veil* is designed to amplify the voices of incarcerated students through essays, poetry, artwork, and creative expressions that reflect both their challenges and aspirations.

This initiative affirms education as a tool of liberation and centers the lived experiences of justice-impacted students. Although the first issue has not yet been released, the inaugural volume is scheduled for publication in Fall 2025. The AKD award provided funding for a commercial printer and materials necessary to support the submission, review, and production process—ensuring that the voices of those within the *Veil* are heard, valued, and empowered.

Alpha Kappa Delta (AKD) is the international honor society for sociology, and receiving this award places the work of incarcerated students at Bowie State University in dialogue with broader sociological conversations across global academic and activist communities. It reflects the national—and international—reach of the program's vision and underscores the importance of lifting up marginalized voices in the struggle for justice and educational equity.

Orijin Contract & Computer Access

Technology Partnership: Orijin Learning Platform

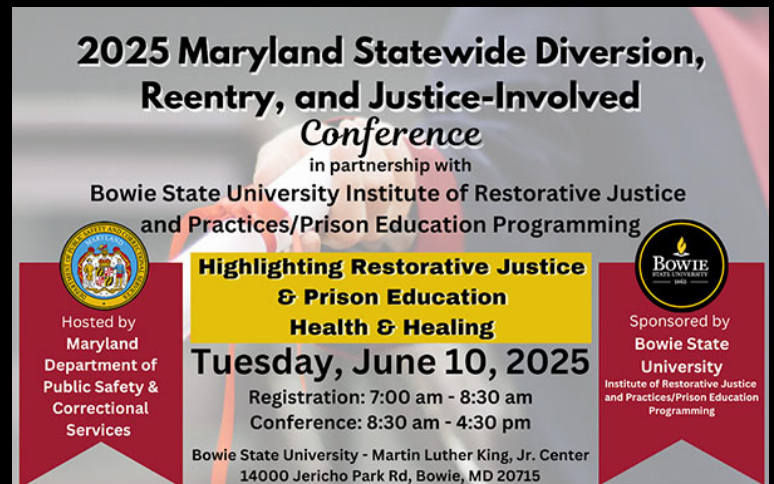
In Academic Year 2024–2025, the Bowie State University Prison Education Program (BPEP) launched a partnership with Orijin, a secure educational technology provider serving correctional institutions. Through this collaboration, students at Jessup Correctional Institution accessed Orijin's Learning Management System (LMS), which includes virtual classrooms, TED Talks, MasterClass, legal resources, and academic support tools—all within a secure, monitored environment.

The Orijin partnership reflects BPEP's commitment to expanding educational equity through technology, and reinforces the program's ability to meet federal mandates while preparing students for successful reentry and academic achievement.



Maryland Statewide Diversion, Reentry, & Justice-Involved Conference

In June 2025, the Bowie State University Prison Education Program co-organized and sponsored the Third Annual Maryland Statewide Diversion, Reentry, and Justice-Involved Conference in partnership with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). Held on the campus of Bowie State University, the conference brought together government officials, educators, service providers, returning citizens, and advocates from across the state to advance conversations around restorative justice, prison education, and community healing.



The BSU Prison Education team led key aspects of planning, logistics, and programming—including curating the Prison Education Programming panel, featuring institutional leaders, practitioners, and formerly incarcerated scholars. The conference highlighted innovative practices, cross-sector collaborations, and policy developments shaping the future of reentry and education in Maryland.

This convening reflects BSU's continued leadership in building a more just and equitable society through community-centered, justice-informed educational partnerships.



Association of Black Sociologists Annual Conference in Montreal, Canada: A Wholistic Approach to Higher Education in Prison: Building the Prison-to-HBCU-Pipeline



Drs. Gatewood, Jackson, and Adams presentation of "A Wholistic Approach to Higher Education in Prison: Building the Prison-to-HBCU-Pipeline" was accepted at the Association of Black Sociologist's Annual Conference. The 2024 conference took place in Montreal, Canada. The presentation will outlined program development, radical pedagogical approaches, logistical barriers, and institutional support and resistance. We will also leverage current research that shows how higher education in prison positively affects the communities that incarcerated students come from. Ultimately, our vision for the future extends beyond mere academic achievement; it encompasses the holistic transformation of individuals and communities. Through the Prison-to-HBCU-Pipeline, we envision a future where education serves as a vehicle for liberation, where every individual—regardless of past mistakes or societal labels—has the opportunity to thrive.

Contact Us :



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