

**Developing a Program of Postsecondary Academic Instruction Over the  
Transforming Lives Network  
Topic: Postsecondary Education, Goal Two: Development  
Submitted by the Correctional Education Association, November 2006**

## **Project Summary**

The [College of the Air](#) curricula delivered via the Transforming Lives Network (COA/TLN) has great potential to increase access, persistence, and completion of courses by incarcerated youth leading to postsecondary degrees. This proposal seeks to obtain impact data to determine the efficacy of this approach.

Forty-five prisons with a high concentration of youth offenders (aged 18-25) in Massachusetts, Colorado, Iowa, Oklahoma, and Nevada will comprise the sample for the study. These prisons represent a combination of minimum-, medium-, and maximum-security institutions; reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of their state inmate populations; and consist of male and female inmates, with a disproportionate representation of males, reflecting the more general characteristics of U.S. prisons. The population from which study participants will be sampled includes inmates: (1) between the ages of 18 and 25; (2) with a release date between 1 and 5 years; (3) in possession of a high school diploma or equivalent; and (4) whose tuition costs are paid through external grant funding.

A cluster randomized trial design will be used in which prisons will be randomly assigned to receive COA/TLN programming or other programming that would normally be offered. Outcomes for participants in COA/TLN and control sites will be compared. Participant outcomes to be examined include academic achievement, achievement motivation, educational aspirations, progress toward completing a postsecondary degree, and improved employability. Outcomes for institutions include participation in postsecondary and other academic programming, institutional climate, and rates of recidivism.

Qualitative data collection will include observations and interviews with participants and administrators in a representative sample of sites. These data will be used to closely examine implementation components, to triangulate data collected using other methods, and to inform design and refinement of COA/TLN content and delivery.

Data analyses will examine: (1) the nature and extent of COA/TLN instructional delivery and associated institutional support; (2) the nature and extent of inmate participation in COA/TLN and other types of postsecondary academic instruction; and (3) the effect of COA/TLN on participant outcome measures.

Hierarchical linear regression models (HLM) and repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) will be used to examine participant and institutional outcomes, respectively. Measures of participant exposure to different aspects of course content and delivery, participant and institutional characteristics, and other factors will be examined to provide information about the extent to which these factors mediate the impact of participation in COA/TLN.