

9th Annual Incarceration in America Conference Focuses on Outcomes and New Directions

JUNE 19, 2017

Bennington College's Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) hosted a conference on The Future of Higher Education in Prison on April 28-29, the ninth annual convening that forms part of the College's **Incarceration in America initiative**, a project established formally in 2014 to address the fact that the U.S. prison population has increased 400% in the past forty years.



In addition to discussions about the future of higher education in prison, conference participants assessed the effects of this annual

conference on activism around mass incarceration. For example:

- In fall of 2016, the College acted as host for a retreat and working session for the leadership of the Women's Community Justice Project (WCJP). Rita Zimmer of the WCJP made a presentation about the fact that the organization was recently awarded \$2.2 million by New York City for each of the next three years to divert women from Rikers Island.
- Bennington faculty member Annabel Davis-Goff spoke about how the spring 2015 convening led to Bennington College's **Prison Education Initiative**, which began that fall with courses being offered at Great

Meadow Correctional Facility, a maximum-security men's prison in Comstock, New York. In the summer of 2016, the Department of Education announced that Bennington was selected from a competitive national pool to participate in the Second Chance Pell pilot program.

- Glenn Martin of JustLeadershipUSA has been a constant participant in our Incarceration in America conferences; his CloseRikers campaign, which grew out of conversations at CAPA's conferences, has now been endorsed by the Mayor of New York City. Many of the principals of the campaign have spoken at Incarceration conferences, and alliances and agreements have been developed at them.