



# Policy and Procedure Manual for the Prison Education Program

Updated July 20, 2021

## **Overview**

Established in the Fall of 2015, the “Seminary” program is a cooperative effort between University of the Southwest (USW), private donors, and the Lea County Correctional Facility (LCCF). Its purpose is to provide undergraduate courses in Christian Studies to inmate students who desire to use this information and training to promote moral rehabilitation within the New Mexico corrections system. While USW is not a seminary (and a program of this nature does not fit the technical definition of “seminary”), this program will adopt modern nomenclature for programs of this type by using the word “seminary.” Under the direction of the Prison Seminary Director at USW, USW will offer undergraduate courses leading to either a Bachelor of Arts in Community Leadership and Social Engagement or a Bachelor of Business Administration in Management. This program is at-will and may be terminated by written acknowledgement from USW, the donors, and/or LCCF.

In April 2020, USW was approved to serve as a Second Chance Pell Experimental Site with the United States Department of Education (DOE). Through this Experimental Site Initiative (ESI) with the DOE, USW will be able to award Pell Grant funds to incarcerated students who meet all eligibility criterion set forth by DOE, LCCF, and USW. This Policy and Procedure Manual for the Prison Education Program will outline the various requirements of eligibility for the Seminary program and the ESI.

## **Admissions**

### **Seminary Track:**

Individuals who qualify for and are admitted to the seminary program may apply for the Bachelor of Arts in Community Leadership and Social Engagement (hereafter “BA”). Conditioned upon continued donor support, individuals who do not qualify for Pell funding may be admitted to the program for a select portion of this degree. Those ineligible for Pell who wish to continue their studies for this BA degree shall, on their own, need to acquire funding in other ways in order to complete all course requirements for the attainment of that degree. Those desiring to earn all credits required for the BA degree may complete them with USW if they meet the eligibility criterion of the ESI. They may also complete these credits at another accredited institution of higher education for consideration of credit transfer. There is no certificate only option for this track.

### **Business Administration in Management Track:**

Students may also pursue a Bachelor of Business Administration with an emphasis in Management (hereafter BBA). The BBA track may only be pursued by those who qualify for

Second Chance Pell through the ESI. Students may transfer eligible credits into this degree program. There is no certificate option for this track.

### **Transfer Credits**

USW will consider for transfer only college-level credits earned from an accredited college, university, or seminary as recognized by the United States Department of Education. USW will not consider any transfer credits from an unaccredited academic institution.

Students in the prison education program may transfer any number of courses onto their degree plan provided that they meet the criterion mentioned above and match the requirements for a USW degree. Transfer credits must match closely to the course offerings of the USW degree plan and academic catalog including but not limited to: course description, prefix compatibility, levels (whether 1000, 2000, 3000, or 4000), credit hours, and the grade earned. Students may transfer credits at equal or lower course levels; however, in most cases students may not substitute lower level courses for upper level courses (see “Appeal Process and Exceptions Policy”). Students may not transfer remedial courses from another institution, nor can they transfer any grade lower than a “D” into the student’s academic major or minor. Students in the prison education program do not have to complete their final 30 hours at USW in order to receive a USW degree provided that the student has completed 30 hours at USW.

Considerations for transfer credits will be made by USW in conjunction with its Dean, Registrar, Admissions Director, and Program Director. Students have the right to appeal a transfer decision through the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences through written correspondence (see the “Appeal Process and Exceptions Policy” below). The Dean’s decision will be considered final.

### **Admission Requirements**

The admission requirements for any program or track vary by various partners of this initiative. These partners include USW, DOE, and LCCF. Each respective partner may set forth their own admission requirements that are subject to change with or without notice. Below are USW’s admission requirements.

USW may admit students into any of its programs at its own discretion. USW is under no obligation to admit any applicant into any of its programs or tracks regardless of the recommendations from other constituents. Applicants need not provide proof of high school graduation or standardized test scores. To be considered for admission at USW, the applicant will need to complete the following:

- Complete and return the University admissions form;
- Complete and return the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) form;

- Be approved and recommended by a representative of LCCF and/or the New Mexico Department of Corrections (DOC);

Those pursuing the BA or BBA tracks with USW must qualify for and be approved for Pell Grant funds through the ESI. Those who are not eligible to receive Pell Grant funding are not eligible for admission to USW under the BBA. Those pursuing the BA option but are not Pell eligible may be admitted and enrolled for up to 42 credit hours conditioned upon continual financial support from donors to the seminary program (if all other eligibility criterion are met). Whether pursuing the BA or the BBA, all applicants must complete and return the FAFSA form to USW in order to be considered for admissions.

### **Application Procedure**

To apply for any track or program offered by USW at LCCF, inmates must work in collaboration with the appropriate correctional official. USW shall not be involved with the selection process set forth by LCCF and/or DOC. USW shall receive university admission forms and FAFSAs recommended by LCCF and/or DOC through the appropriate liaison to USW's Prison Seminary Director.

No student may be admitted for the full BA or BBA tracks without Pell Grant funding (or other sources of funding to cover tuition fees).

USW will then evaluate the applicants in light of its own admissions requirements. All applications and accompanying materials must be received by USW no later than thirty days prior to the start of a given term. USW reserves the right to reject applications made after this time for the following academic term. Students will be considered admitted when they have successfully completed all steps for admissions including receiving the approval from DOC, DOE (if applicable), and other relevant stakeholders. USW has the final say of applicants admitted to the University. Students will be notified of their application status through the chaplain or other corrections official.

### **Transcripts and Test Scores**

USW may consider (as outlined above) eligible classes for credit transfer. For previous coursework to be considered for transfer, the credits must meet the eligibility outlined above. In addition, USW must receive official transcripts directly from the transferring institution in a sealed envelope. USW will not consider transcripts that are not official, originating from the academic institution, and/or have a broken envelope. This may require assistance from the correctional center's education department, an authorized individual with power of attorney, or other relevant means complying with state and federal laws; however, no transcripts will be

accepted by USW unless they are official transcripts originating from the educational institution from which the applicant/student desires transfer of credits.

### **Timeframe and Continuous Enrollment**

Some courses for the BA in Community Leadership and Social Engagement may be offered in-person at LCCF. Students will begin with a cohort typically not to exceed 25 students at the beginning of a Fall term. Students are expected to take each class that is offered each term, including summer and mini-terms, as it relates to their program track. Students may not take less than the full number of courses offered to their cohorts each term unless said courses do not relate to the track the student wishes to pursue.

Students who pursue the BBA or the remaining coursework within the BA will pursue their studies through online education. A course schedule will be provided to LCCF officials who will assist in the registration process in collaboration with USW's admission personnel. Students may take as many courses as they are authorized to take by LCCF and USW. Students pursuing this online education option must take at least one class per term in order to be considered continuously enrolled.

If for some reason a student is unable to retain continuous enrollment and complete the program (due perhaps to illness, a failing course grade, or other reason as approved by USW and correctional staff), the student may be permitted to take the course(s) again in a subsequent term provided that such is possible and approved by USW and correctional personnel. No guarantee can be made by USW or correctional staff as to a placement for the student who failed to complete successfully a course.

### **Removal of Students**

Students may be removed from the prison education program by USW personnel, correctional personnel, or by self-withdrawal. Reasons USW may withdraw students include (but are not limited to): poor academic performance, a failure to comply with university policies, academic dishonesty, failure to remain enrolled continuously, or other violations as recorded in the current USW Student Handbook available at <https://www.usw.edu/Student-Life/Student-Handbook>.

The Department of Corrections may withdraw students for any reason they determine in accordance with their own policies, requirements, and expectations. Should the Department of Corrections remove a student from the seminary program, the student will be withdrawn from the university. Students may withdraw from the program at any time by completing the Withdrawal Request form.

### **Appeal Process and Exceptions Policy**

Any appeal process concerning the correctional facility will be made through the policies and procedures of the correctional facility. Should a student wish to appeal a decision by USW, its faculty, or its staff, the student may write to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at 6610 N Lovington Hwy #T40, Hobbs, NM 88240. Administrative exceptions to procedures, course substitutions, and other relevant programmatic changes may be made by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.