

## PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM ADDITIONAL LOCATION VISIT REPORT FORM

### Directions

Complete an on-site verification the information provided in the institution's Ad Hoc report or substantive change proposal and answer the following questions. Document findings for each question and provide strengths and/or opportunities for improvement.

### Form Submission Directions

A draft of the Visit Report Form is to be sent to the NWCCU liaison for review. The draft completion timeframe is seven (7) calendar days from the end date of the evaluation visit.

After considering the NWCCU liaison's feedback, please send the draft report to the institution's President and the institution's Accreditation Officer (ALO) to review for errors of fact. The institution is allowed seven calendar days (7) to reply to the draft Visit Report Form.

After considering suggested factual corrections or redactions received from the institution, if any, finalize the Visit Report Form within seven calendar (7) days and upload the form in PDF format to the NWCCU Evaluator Portal.

### Additional Location Verification

Institution name: Evergreen State College at Stafford Creek Corrections Center

Name and street address of correctional facility (or facilities): 191 Constantine Way, Aberdeen, WA 98520

Date of visit: April 22-23, 2026

Evaluator: Emma Chaput

### Location

Is the location(s) at the approved address and is the program offered as described in the institution's Ad Hoc report or substantive change proposal?

Yes  No

*Comments:*

Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCCC) is located 8 miles outside the town of Aberdeen, WA. The prison houses roughly 2,000 incarcerated individuals and supports a mix of minimum,

medium, and maximum-security levels. This visit consisted of an on-site review of the education program areas at SCCC offered by the Evergreen Prison Education Program (EPEP), which offers a Bachelor of Arts degree from The Evergreen State College. The visit included a 2-hour in-person listening session with 22 students representing both the “Cornerstone” and “Capstone” cohorts, as well as virtual conversations with program leadership, program staff, program faculty, student support staff, Evergreen administrative leadership, and Washington State DOC education leadership. In addition, program materials, assessment materials, and other student support materials were reviewed as evidence to support the Ad Hoc Report.

EPEP launched in January 2024 and expanded to a second cohort following federal Pell eligibility approval. EPEP currently enrolls approximately 30 students and is preparing for its first graduation ceremony in August 2026, with 12–14 students expected to participate. Instruction is delivered in-person by Evergreen faculty, and the program operates under a current Interagency Agreement with the Washington Department of Corrections.

EPEP has two classroom spaces available at SCCC; one shared with Grays Harbor College and one dedicated to EPEP. Most students have been provided with DOC-approved laptops and docking stations in classrooms allow students the ability to print assignments. On-site review confirmed that instructional spaces, two-cohort enrollment, and program operations align with the approved substantive change request and with the implementation status described in Evergreen’s Ad Hoc Report.

DOC education leadership affirmed that Stafford Creek has emerged as a statewide model. As DOC’s education services manager noted, the facility’s approach to supporting education partners is one that other institutions are being encouraged to emulate. EPEP will be Washington’s first institution to undergo the new Best Interest Determination (BID) assessment process, with final templates and processes expected to receive DOC approval by June 2026.

### Strengths

- There is strong alignment between the approved substantive change proposal and the actual implementation of EPEP in practice. Both DOC and Evergreen leadership confirmed that the program is operating as designed, with no significant deviations from the approved proposal.
- Students report that their educational experience is student-directed and is providing practical opportunities to create change, both within and outside the carceral setting. During the listening session, students spoke of developing scholarly and creative inquiry projects with real-world implications.
- Evergreen’s institutional commitment to carceral education is deep and longstanding: the college has a continuous 30-year history serving system impacted people through the Gateways for Incarcerated Youth program (since 1996) and the Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP; since 2003). This history provides a strong cultural and operational foundation for EPEP.

- The program has the active support of Evergreen’s president and executive leadership, who provided initial tuition waivers to launch the program before federal Pell eligibility was confirmed. Evergreen leadership expressed unconditional institutional commitment to the program regardless of state appropriation changes.

- Attendance at recruiting sessions has more than doubled from approximately 20 to 60 interested students over the program’s first two years, indicating powerful word-of-mouth impact from current students and affirming the program’s visibility and reputation within the facility.

“This program provides exactly the kind of holistic, transformative education that our students deserve. They are not just learning job skills—they are becoming thoughtful, contributive members of society. That’s what education is for.” EPEP Co-Director

“Students here are more serious than any students I’ve taught on campus. They complete all the readings and engage at a graduate seminar level.” EPEP Faculty

#### Opportunities / Areas for Growth

- Classroom capacity limitations constrain enrollment and prevent Evergreen from delivering its standard co-teaching model. The largest regularly available space holds approximately 35 students, limiting program scale and the model of two faculty simultaneously teaching a cohort of 50 or more.

- No dedicated office space exists for EPEP program staff at Stafford Creek. Staff must reserve rooms in a separate building from the education area in advance, preventing easy drop-in advising, complicating IT support and financial aid phone calls that require business-hour access.

- Shared use of classroom space with Grays Harbor Community College creates logistical challenges. Early in the program’s operation, coordination issues around shared equipment (e.g., printers) required the development of workarounds such as combination locks. While largely resolved, the arrangement continues to require active communication and goodwill between partners.

“We’ve worked out most of the early logistics, but not having our own dedicated space continues to create friction, especially for things like advising or financial aid calls that require privacy and consistent access.” EPEP Program Staff

## Instructional Resources

Are the instructional resources (e.g., technology) as described in the Ad Hoc report or substantive change proposal? What evidence demonstrates that these resources are appropriate for the program offered?

Yes  No

*Comments:*

In interviews with program directors, faculty, and students, there was general agreement that the instructional resources are adequate and largely as described in the Ad Hoc Report. EPEP facilitates provision of DOC-approved laptops to eligible students, printed course materials, textbooks, and classroom technology (e.g., screens and whiteboards) sufficient to support Evergreen's inquiry-driven, seminar-based pedagogy. Technology access is constrained by DOC security protocols and by challenges with communication and tech support between DOC, EPEP faculty/staff, and students.

Of particular concern this term was the delayed laptop availability, especially for students engaged in capstone work requiring access to JSTOR, library books, and other research materials. The last two laptops for the cohort were not distributed until Week 4 of the 10-week quarter due to new DOC credentialing requirements. Despite this, all 10 capstone students made progress on their individualized scholarly projects, supported by faculty-provided printed resources and creative problem-solving from program staff.

Technology infrastructure is governed by DOC's Off-State Network (OSN), developed collaboratively with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The network approves approximately 400 websites total, including 100+ education-specific resources. Evergreen is working with DOC IT to develop a customized network approach suited to a four-year liberal arts program, distinct from the community college model. DOC IT confirmed that expanding Wi-Fi access to classrooms and living units across all prisons is a current infrastructure priority.

Strengths

- Students expressed genuine appreciation for access to course materials on DOC-approved laptops and the use of the EPEP shared drive and docking stations for printing. Students noted these resources ease coursework and assignment submission.
- Students appreciate the Kiosk communication system (physical ATM-style terminals in housing units) as an effective channel for direct communication with EPEP staff, a meaningful improvement over the former paper-based "kite" system.
- Faculty have worked with DOC to expand Evergreen library resource access for students, including JSTOR and physical library books. The program coordinator transcribes handwritten student narrative evaluations into academic records, demonstrating institutional commitment to maintaining academic integrity within paper-based constraints.

- Despite the absence of a Learning Management System (LMS), faculty described curriculum that is equivalent in rigor and content to Evergreen’s Olympia campus. Students engage in sustained interdisciplinary inquiry and produce substantial academic work.

“Even though students don’t have Canvas, the course content and assignments are identical to what we offer on campus. The students are doing graduate-level seminar work.” EPEP Faculty

#### Opportunities / Areas for Growth

- Clearer and more consistent communication with DOC is needed regarding available digital resources (e.g., the Evergreen library database) and technology access timelines (e.g., laptop availability delays). Establishing a formal communication protocol between EPEP, DOC security, and DOC IT could reduce delays and improve predictability for students and faculty.
- Students observed that access to the EPEP shared drive and docking stations in housing unit resource rooms could streamline their processes. Expanding these access points would support more independent academic work outside of class time.
- The absence of Canvas or an equivalent LMS is a barrier to students’ ability to engage fully with digital academic resources and to prepare for post-release continuation of studies.
- Audiovisual technology is limited in classrooms. Correctional officers must manipulate light switches to enable projector use, disrupting class flow and preventing students from simultaneously taking notes. Achieving AV parity with Grays Harbor Community College’s classroom setup could be a discussion point with DOC.

“We had students going into Week 4 without laptops for their capstone thesis work. They showed incredible stoicism but that’s not a situation they should have to be stoic about.” EPEP Program Leadership

“The library catalog access request was submitted in September, claimed as approved, but was non-functional. A new request was submitted in January and still hasn’t been resolved.” EPEP Faculty

## Financial Resources

Are the financial resources for the location(s) as described in the Ad Hoc report or substantive change proposal? What evidence demonstrates that the institution effectively plans for growth and maintenance of this program?

Yes  No

*Comments:*

The Ad Hoc Report and additional documents demonstrate a strong financial commitment from Evergreen to ensure EPEP's initial and ongoing success. The college provided significant investment in staffing resources and covered tuition through institutional waivers prior to receipt of federal Pell grant approval. EPEP currently operates on an annual budget of approximately \$670,000 and college leadership has expressed unconditional commitment to the program regardless of changes in state appropriation levels.

The current funding model is braided and multi-source, drawing on federal Pell grants, the Washington College Grant, DOC tuition coverage for students ineligible for federal aid, institutional support, and philanthropic giving. The Evergreen State College Foundation provides donor scholarship funding for tuition and fees, including, for example, students whose credit hours exceed the 180-credit DOC coverage threshold, enabling continued enrollment up to 225 credits when faculty offer extended course sequences such as the trauma and care three-quarter elective series. A 0.5 FTE financial aid specialist position has been budgeted and is currently in process with HR, which will provide dedicated support for the labor-intensive paper-based financial aid processes.

Program and institutional leadership acknowledged that Pell grants, while foundational, are insufficient to cover the full cost of program operation and there is the ongoing necessity of blended funding streams to incorporate federal and state financial aid, state and institutional funding, donor funding, and grant opportunities. Evergreen leadership described a potential future state of the EPEP financial model drawing inspiration from Evergreen's 35-year House of Welcome program, which has sustained itself through a combination of grants, long-time donors, and college support.

### Strengths

- Evergreen's financial commitment to EPEP is a significant strength and provides program staff and faculty with stability.
- The blended funding model reflects best practices in prison education finance nationally and provides multiple redundancies.
- Current student enrollment aligns with anticipated projections, confirming educational need and supporting positive future enrollment outlook. Recruiting session interest has tripled, indicating growing demand and a pipeline of future students.
- Donor scholarship funds provide an important bridge for students who need to exceed the 180-credit DOC coverage limit, enabling continued academic progress. The Liberation Scholars program provides additional donor-funded support for students post-release.

- The Evergreen State College Foundation has a strong track record in fundraising for related programs (e.g., SPP) and is actively engaged in supporting EPEP, providing a proven philanthropic infrastructure.

“We are committed to this program for the long haul—our 30-year history with incarcerated populations through Gateways and SPP shows this isn’t a trend for us. It’s who we are.” Evergreen Administrative Leadership

#### Opportunities / Areas for Growth

- Fully staffing budgeted positions, particularly the 0.5 FTE financial aid advisor currently in process with HR, would meaningfully alleviate operational strain on program staff who currently manage complex, paper-based financial aid processes alongside other duties.
- As the program matures beyond its startup phase and approaches the strategic planning retreat planned for summer 2026, developing a formal 3 to 5-year financial sustainability plan with identified funding targets, donor cultivation priorities, and grant opportunities would strengthen long-term viability.

## Institutional Oversight

Does the evidence confirm that the institution effectively oversees instruction at the correctional facility(ies)?

Yes  No

*Comments:*

Through document review and interviews with program leadership, faculty, staff, and DOC partners, Evergreen clearly provides effective institutional oversight of EPEP programming at Stafford Creek. The program is co-directed by two experienced leaders, Kelli Bush, who brings 16 years in prison education and strong relationships across all 10 Washington DOC facilities, and Eirik Steinhoff, a veteran Evergreen faculty member and former Bard Prison Initiative instructor, supported by a dedicated Assistant Director, Program Coordinator, faculty team, and overseen by the Dean of Prison Education and Graduate Programs. This leadership structure provides both operational expertise and hierarchical accountability appropriate to the DOC interface environment.

Faculty oversight, curriculum approval, assessment practices, and student services are aligned with expectations for Evergreen campus programs. Regular communication between Evergreen leadership, DOC partners, and program staff supports consistent oversight and responsiveness to student and program needs. EPEP has successfully transitioned out of a startup phase

characterized by significant uncertainty, operating initially without Pell grant approval, under financial uncertainty, and with emerging systems and processes.

### Strengths

- EPEP benefits from a flat organizational structure in which program directors manage day-to-day operations while the Dean of Prison Education and Graduate Programs provides the hierarchical interface required for DOC partnership.
- The DOC's new education leadership team has prioritized education and equity, creating a collaborative rather than adversarial partnership. Evergreen's relationship with DOC is described by both parties as strong, communicative, and mutually respectful.
- Evergreen's 30-year institutional history with incarcerated populations through Gateways and SPP provides a deep reservoir of institutional knowledge, existing DOC relationships, and organizational learning that directly benefits EPEP.
- The co-director model leverages complementary expertise: academic and curricular leadership on one side, and administrative, relationship, and operational experience on the other, a structure that has proven effective for managing a complex dual-system environment.
- The program is actively engaged with national prison education networks, including the Bard Prison Initiative consortium, Higher Education in Prisons consortium for Washington State, and Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (FEPPS), providing access to external learning and peer institutions' best practices.

"DOC Education Leadership really prioritize education and equity." Evergreen Administrative Leadership

"Stafford Creek serves as a statewide model for how facility leadership and education partners can work together. Other facilities are being pointed to this site as the example." DOC Education Leadership

### Opportunities / Areas for Growth

- As EPEP becomes more established, ensuring continuing documentation of institutional systems, procedures, and DOC relationship protocols can prevent critical knowledge from residing only in individual staff members.
- Faculty reported ambiguity about where college authority ends and DOC authority begins, making it difficult to set student expectations accurately. Developing and distributing a faculty handbook that documents the college/DOC relationship, communication protocols, and guidance for realistic student expectation-setting would reduce confusion and improve faculty confidence.

“We’re still building the plane while flying it. The lack of formalized procedures creates real stress—for staff, for faculty, and it ripples out to students and their families.” EPEP Faculty

## Assessment

Does the evidence confirm that the measures and techniques employed for assessment and evaluation at the location(s) are equivalent to those provided on the main campus?

Yes  No

### *Comments:*

Assessment practices for EPEP students are equivalent to those used on Evergreen’s main campus. Students receive narrative evaluations written by faculty, complete required self-evaluations, and participate in one-on-one evaluation conferences, consistent with Evergreen’s institution-wide assessment philosophy. Learning outcomes, academic expectations, and curricular rigor mirror on-campus offerings. Faculty confirmed that course content, assignments, textbooks, and learning objectives are identical to those used in on-campus Evergreen courses.

Student feedback mechanisms, including class check-ins, all-school assemblies, written input, and surveys, provide additional formative assessment opportunities. Faculty and staff confirmed that assessment integrity is maintained despite the paper-based environment. Student work demonstrates deep engagement and achievement comparable to Evergreen students in non-carceral settings.

### Strengths

- Assessment practices at EPEP align with Evergreen’s institution-wide philosophy. These practices are not accommodations or substitutions; they are identical to those offered on the main campus.
- The capstone cohort’s individualized thesis projects demonstrate sophisticated scholarly and creative inquiry. All 10 capstone students are actively engaged in their projects despite significant technology disruptions, reflecting both strong faculty support and genuine student investment in their academic work.
- All-school monthly assemblies provide a cross-cohort community assessment touchpoint, allowing program leadership to identify shared concerns and celebrate collective achievements. Students have used these assemblies to raise program improvements that were subsequently implemented.

- The process of transcribing student self-evaluations from handwritten to academic records provides a unique direct line of evidence of student growth.

“Reading students’ self-evaluations from orientation through their final quarter is extraordinary. You can trace the development not just as learners but as people—the growth is undeniable and deeply moving.” EPEP Program Staff

#### Opportunities / Areas for Growth

- Faculty reported that the absence of Canvas or any LMS creates challenges for providing timely feedback, sharing resources, and building on prior quarter’s work.
- Library database access remains inconsistently available to students, limiting their ability to conduct research comparable to what on-campus students can access. A formal library access agreement with specific implementation timelines could be an area to explore with DOC.
- Establishing the BID student survey, currently being piloted at Stafford Creek, as a sustainable, regular data collection mechanism could provide longitudinal evidence of student outcomes over time and support ongoing program improvement and advocacy.

## Institutional Staffing and Support

Does the evidence confirm that the institution has appropriately qualified and sufficient staff and faculty in place at the correctional facility(ies) and that the institution supports and evaluates these employees?

Yes  No

*Comments:*

The institution has appropriately qualified faculty and staff in place to support the program at Stafford Creek. Faculty teaching in EPEP hold terminal degrees and meet the same hiring criteria as faculty on Evergreen’s Olympia campus. The staffing model includes co-directors, an assistant director, a program coordinator, part-time adjunct faculty, IT support, and student success professionals. The program’s small, dedicated team has successfully integrated two complex institutional systems, a liberal arts college and the Department of Corrections, demonstrating adaptability, resilience, and commitment that goes well beyond typical instructional expectations.

Staffing structure at the time of review included: Program Co-Directors Kelli Bush (50% on EPEP) and Eirik Steinhoff (50% Director and 50% faculty); Assistant Director V Hoy (80–85% time on EPEP); Program Coordinator Alex Markley (90% time on PEP); and Program Specialist Sarah Larson

(approximately one-third time on EPEP and two-thirds on the Sustainability in Prisons Project). Each team member plays a critical coordination role in maintaining program operations within highly constrained institutional and regulatory conditions. The faculty pool draws from instructors experienced with Evergreen's non-traditional pedagogy, many of whom teach at the Evergreen Olympia campus.

### Strengths

- Faculty consistently demonstrated unwavering commitment to students through consistent attendance despite lockdowns, weather events, and administrative barriers. Students reported that the reliability of faculty and staff follow-through is itself a meaningful dimension of the program's impact, modeling institutional trustworthiness in an environment where trust is often absent.
- Co-Director Eirik Steinhoff's deep familiarity with Evergreen's pedagogical model, combined with Co-Director Kelli Bush's extensive DOC relationship network across all 10 Washington facilities, provides EPEP with complementary and highly specialized leadership expertise.
- Assistant Director V Hoy's background in harm reduction and homeless services brings a student-centered, trauma-informed lens to EPEP administration that is particularly well-suited to the complexity of supporting incarcerated students through financial aid, academic advising, and orientation.
- The institution has 20+ years of experience with the Sustainability in Prisons Project, providing a reservoir of carceral education expertise that directly informs EPEP staffing decisions, DOC relationship management, and program design.
- Faculty report deep satisfaction in the quality of student engagement, describing EPEP students as among the most committed and intellectually serious they have taught, which provides intrinsic motivation that partially offsets structural challenges.

"Our team is small, but the commitment is extraordinary. The coordination required to make this program work—across DOC, campus offices, financial aid, and the facility—is genuinely unlike anything else in the institution." EPEP Program Staff

### Opportunities / Areas for Growth

- Faculty mileage reimbursement reflects a structural inequity that should be addressed. Adjunct faculty have Stafford Creek designated as their duty station, making them ineligible for reimbursement of the 1-hour-15-minute commute to the facility from their Olympia offices, despite doing most of their preparation work on campus. This policy is experienced by faculty as not

acknowledging their time and investment and creates a meaningful financial burden, limiting opportunities for faculty to attend study halls / additional office hours.

- Faculty are absorbing significant non-instructional labor as well as affective and cognitive burden without institutional recognition: providing writing support equivalent to a Writing Center, emotional care typically managed by mental health services, and librarian-equivalent research assistance. This informal labor is currently invisible in workload calculations.
- Improvement by SCCC leadership related to when the education building is opened is a potential area for growth. Currently EPEP faculty must wait for dinner service to be completed before Corrections will unlock classrooms reducing instructional time by 15–30 minutes per session, Dean-level negotiation through MOU modifications could be an opportunity address this disparity.
- Cost-per-student metrics for EPEP are higher than some institutional comparisons, but this context is not adequately recognized by institutional leadership, nor does it reflect the significant direct appropriation Evergreen receives for this work from the WA State Legislature. Program staff noted that these metrics do not reflect the extraordinary coordination burden, dual-system integration requirements, and the additional labor required to serve students in a correctional environment. Institutional reporting should include contextual narrative alongside cost data.

“We shouldn’t be relying on faculty to provide writing support, emotional support, and library research help. Those are real student services that students on the Olympia campus take for granted. Our students deserve the same.” EPEP Faculty

## Student Support

Does the evidence confirm that the institution delivers necessary student services (e.g., advising, financial aid, etc.) as indicated in the Ad Hoc report or substantive change proposal??

Yes  No

*Comments:* Evidence confirms that Evergreen delivers essential student support services to EPEP students as described in the Ad Hoc Report. Academic advising, financial aid counseling, access services, and reentry planning are provided through adapted, paper-based processes that comply with DOC restrictions. The cross-departmental implementation team, established during the program’s startup phase with weekly meetings that have since transitioned to a direct-contact model, ensures efficient coordination across campus offices without requiring ongoing standing meetings.

Evergreen’s Access Services Director conducts in-person facility visits to provide disability accommodations, including paper-based intake forms adapted from online systems. Approved

accommodations include audio-format textbooks, note-taking services using carbon copy paper, and assistive technology through laptop accessibility suites. Financial Aid processes paper FAFSAs and WASFAs for incarcerated students and most students are eligible for both Pell grants and the Washington College Grant, meeting their full cost of attendance; DOC funding is also available, as are Evergreen scholarships. Academic Advising (led by Assistant Director V Hoy) maintains direct contacts across campus offices and provides graduation application support, transcript evaluation, financial aid coordination, and academic statement feedback.

While these services require significantly more labor than their online equivalents due to the absence of digital systems, they are robust, well-coordinated, and responsive to student needs. Students confirmed awareness of and access to these services during the listening session, and faculty expressed confidence in the support network available to their students.

### Strengths

- Access Services has demonstrated notable flexibility in adapting to DOC constraints: accepting student self-report for disabilities when decades-old school records are unavailable, and developing creative alternatives when DOC denied specific devices (e.g., providing scanned books in electronic format compatible with laptop text-to-speech when C-PEN was denied based on documentation requirements).
- The Washington College Grant, as well as DOC funding and Evergreen scholarships, remain available for students in federal loan default providing a critical funding pathway for students who might otherwise be excluded from state financial aid.
- The program's orientation process—which includes rigorous introduction to Evergreen's institutional philosophy through archival materials, student-led culture building, and cohort identity development—prepares students for Evergreen's non-traditional academic model and contributes to strong retention and engagement.

“[Access Services] comes out to the facility and meets with students privately. Having Access Services present in person makes a real difference—students are more comfortable and we can address things we couldn't handle remotely.” EPEP Program Staff

### Opportunities / Areas for Growth

- Paper FAFSA processing remains a significant operational challenge. Processing center staff frequently introduce data entry errors (e.g., incorrect Social Security numbers), federal helpline staff are unfamiliar with paper applications, and obtaining required documentation from students is slow. Washington DOC headquarters is aware of Oregon's solution, enabling students to complete FAFSAs online through individually assigned email accounts accessible only via staff, and Evergreen should actively support DOC's exploration of whitelisting the FAFSA portal ([mystudentaid.gov](http://mystudentaid.gov)).

- The core implementation group—which met weekly during startup—could benefit from reconvening periodically (monthly or termly) to share student success stories and reconnect support staff to the program’s human impact. This type of reconnection supports staff morale and cross-departmental coordination over time.

“Paper FAFSAs are a nightmare. The processing center makes errors; the federal helpline doesn’t know how to help with paper applications and getting Social Security cards from students takes time. Oregon has figured out an online solution—we need that conversation to happen here.” EPEP Financial Aid Staff

### Additional Comments (Optional)