



Inside the Fences and Beyond the Bars: Higher Ed at Oakdale Prison
(a panel discussion)



Heather Erwin

Director, Liberal Arts Beyond Bars (LABB)

Barbara Eckstein

Professor Emerita, English

Patricia Zebrowski

Professor Emerita, Communication Sci & Disorders

Patricia Foster

Professor Emerita, English / Nonfiction Writing

Mary Cohen

Associate Professor, Music Education

4:00 – 5:00 pm

Thursday, October 21, 2021

Please join us on Zoom: <https://uiowa.zoom.us/j/98527745723?pwd=Y3c5akYyYlpkVUV6WnhSRk5nb0J1dz09>



This panel discussion will offer an introduction to higher education in Iowa’s prisons, focusing on the *Iowa Medical & Classification Center* (IMCC; Oakdale Prison) and the *Liberal Arts Beyond the Bars* (LLAB) program. In addition to the introductory class, courses in writing and peace building have been valuable offerings.

In one semester, many students emerged as insightful, competent writers who gave voice to the difficulties of broken families, the emergence of independence, as well as the hilarity of a favorite haircut. Facilitation of the Oakdale Prison Community Choir has helped build relationships between the Iowa Department of Corrections and the University of Iowa. Incarcerated men (inside singers) and community members (outside singers, including UI students, faculty, and staff) have performed concerts inside the prison including original songs and writing reflections.

Our purposes have been to build communities of caring inside, and especially outside of prison walls. Unhealthy stigmas about people in custody limit our ability to move forward toward welcoming returning citizens and dismantling racist policing, legal, and punishing practices.

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all University of Iowa sponsored events. If you are a person with a disability who requires a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this program, please contact Minnetta Gardinier in advance at 319-331-6235 or m-gardinier@uiowa.edu.

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