

## Second Chance Pell Grant Testimony

The Second Chance Pell has allowed me to finish something I started twenty years ago. My first college experience was short lived, ending with my expulsion and arrest for crimes alleged. Although I was found not guilty by the University, my focus was diverted and life happens.

Twenty years later I am completing work in a degree program here at the Maine Correctional Center. My reenrollment began at the Maine State Prison and upon transfer I have continued toward the goal of earning my Associates Degree. I have applied myself to a program of study that reflects my commitment and interest to bettering myself, in many ways validating my sense of worth, proving to myself that I am capable and deserving of a second chance.

Along the way I have seen the very best shine forth from the men who have journeyed alongside me. Men who may have been committed to their term of imprisonment for the very worst moment in their lives, only to find a sense of meaning and a purpose, revealing their intelligence and showing themselves as persons of character, even seeing a different future for themselves, in some cases one of service.

It has been an honor to work with these men as well as with the University staff who come and give of themselves to the process of offering some of the most thoughtful individuals an opportunity to tap into their inner reserves and produce quality work. The support and encouragement I have received from peer and professor has had a profound impact upon me. In more ways than one have I been marginalized, stigmatized, and limited by my own negative perceptions. The kindness and genuine sense of care and concern I have been shown, by my fellows, as well as my educators, has rekindled a healthy self-concept and given me a clearer vision of the person I know myself to be.

I am grateful to each and every person who has participated in this process and who have shown themselves my ally throughout this time. The Correctional staff, especially the Educational Coordinators, who give so much of themselves to assure that we have access to resources and are having our needs met, have helped me grow, search out my hearts desires, and nurtured my love for learning. In many ways I have found these interactions to be of the most meaningful sort, considering that I have never maintained professional relationships and through this educational experience I have come to believe myself equals to those with whom I work. The self-confidence I have found will see me into a future that today looks hopeful and without limits.

My personal testimony to the effectiveness of the Second Chance Pell is one of whole hearted gratitude. It has been a blessing to once again pursue a goal I long ago set for myself and the sense of accomplishment as I close in on my degree opens the door to a world of opportunity. I have learned about human investment theory and social capital, concepts that have fostered within me a personal sense of obligation to succeed. I have rediscovered my own limitless potential and it has been to the credit of the Second Chance Pell Act that I am soon to set out on my own with a wide and clear horizon. Thank You.

Mathew Lucas Ayotte