



Redeeming Scholars

Working Title

OUR VISION

Redeeming Scholars supports equity in accessing high-quality education, training and career opportunities for people who are formerly incarcerated. We work to reverse the school-to-prison pipeline by fostering a community that is welcoming and supportive.

OUR MISSION

Redeeming Scholars mission is to support people who were formerly incarcerated as they return to their communities. We help individuals achieve their educational and career goals, build mentorship and leadership skills, and navigate common obstacles to successful re-entry.

Our Guiding Values

- **The Intrinsic Value of Persons.** We believe that every person has inherent value and holds the power of possibility and transformation within them. Each students' unique experiences should be celebrated, shared, used as a way for innovation, and to transcend the status quo. In respect of this value, we use person-centered language when referring to individuals with an incarceration history (see [Underground Scholars Language Guide](#)).
- **Equitable Access to Education.** We believe that access to meaningful, high-quality, face-to-face post-secondary education should be available to all those who seek it, and it is also a racial justice issue. By actively dismantling systems of oppression and providing a layer of support for students on campus, it is possible to lessen the school-to-prison pipeline and decrease intergenerational cycles of poverty, trauma, unemployment, and confinement.
- **Formerly Incarcerated Leadership and Mentorship.** We believe that the integration, education, leadership, and peer mentorship of formerly incarcerated people are an integral part of students' success and support. We nurture leadership skills and seek influential roles, while at the same time valuing all participants equally, and supporting them in their endeavors.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In 2020, Oregon Solutions heard from individuals with a desire to improve post-secondary educational opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals. Specifically, they want to create a campus-based, peer mentor program to help formerly incarcerated individuals access post-secondary education, including the trades, community college, and universities.

Redeeming Scholars (working title) is a project in development with the help from Oregon Solutions. The Redeeming Scholar team is comprised of members who represent sectors including formerly incarcerated, academic, trades, corrections, nonprofit organizations, parole and probation, courts, foundations, etc. This document is one work product from this collaborative team.



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- **Campus welcoming and belonging.** We believe the campus and its resources exist for the benefit of all members of our community, and that a campus that is closed to individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated fails to fulfill its mission to serve the public and to uphold the values of democracy.
- **Community Connections.** We believe that community is a key to success, and that fostering and sustaining connections is a key element of our work.
- **Education as Public Safety.** We believe that meaningful, high-quality higher education ultimately makes stronger, safer communities; we believe that public resources are better invested in education and other opportunities for transformation than prisons and punishment.
- **Civic Engagement.** We believe that community engagement is at once a right, a responsibility, and a means of empowerment; we aim to inspire all Redeeming Scholars to be informed and engaged civic agents.
- **Gratifying Employment.** We believe that gainful and gratifying employment allows our students to develop a sense of autonomy and agency, the result of which is a generational impact on their families and communities.
- **Access to Resources.** We believe that all students must have access to financial and academic advising support, mental health support, housing resources, and food insecurity, etc.
- **Foster Thriving.** We believe that helping scholars get outside of their comfort zone, meeting new people, and trying new experiences are essential for maximum growth.
- We believe that emotional support - like academic support - is critical for student success.
- We believe that learning about processes is an important facet of successful re-entry, and we strive to incorporate program participants in all aspects of campus and community life.
- We believe that students must have access to tutors on every subject so that they have the opportunity to discover the depth of what they can achieve.