



TRAILBLAZERS

Campbell University Second Chance Initiative at Sampson & Anson Correctional

Sampson Correctional & Anson Correctional Students United Underneath a Common Goal

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By Christopher Shipley
Lead Editor, Staff Writer,
Cohort 3 Student, SCI

The 2025 Fall semester saw many new and old challenges for the students of the Second Chance Initiative. There was a freshman class that had to become re-acquainted with being students again, and the upperclassmen who had to double down on their studies and remind themselves of the ultimate goal. This is true for the student bodies at both Sampson Correctional and Anson Correctional Institutions, where every day presents a new opportunity to achieve beyond the limitations of our pasts.

This edition welcomes those striving students at Anson Correctional to the tradition of the Second Chance Initiative of presenting ourselves to the rest of the Campbell University community, through the platform that is the Trailblazers newsletter.

Since the last publication there have been so many eventful happenings, and momentous accomplishments that we, the students of the Second Chance Initiative, would like to share with the Campbell University community.



The Initiative to Succeed: Cohort 4

By Anthony Smith

Cohort 4 Student, SCI

Campbell University's Second Chance Initiative offers incarcerated students a redemptive opportunity to succeed far beyond their incarceration. This opportunity reflects the university's mission to "graduate students with exemplary academic and professional skills who are

prepared for purposeful lives and meaningful service." While the program extends this mission through the rigor of higher education, the drive to succeed begins with the mindset of each student and grows into a shared commitment.

Though individual ambition led each man to begin this journey, they soon recognized that personal success would depend on collective commitment.

For Cohort 4, success began with an individual decision to apply. Each of the 15 selected men entered the process believing the program offered a pathway to a better future. Isa Jihad recalled, "I was anxious not knowing if I would get accepted into the program. But, at the same time, I was hopeful and grateful for the opportunity to pursue my dreams." Scott Spencer shared, "For two years, I was praying to God for the opportunity just to fill out the application. Once I got the interview, I was praying because

this was my last chance to have a better life upon release." Michael Travalini received his application the day after arriving at Sampson Correctional Institution and was told that it was due the next day. Despite the short notice, he completed it immediately, driven by his determination to succeed.



Though individual ambition led each man to begin this journey, they soon recognized that personal success would depend on collective commitment.

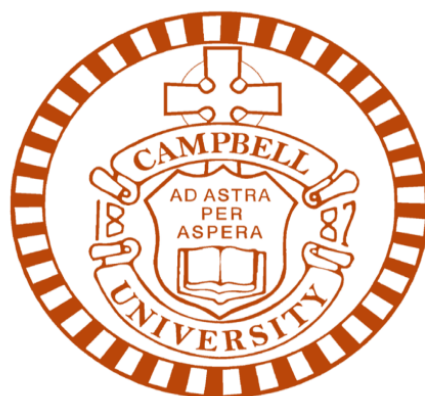
That commitment became clear when all 15 members of Cohort 4 gathered on the recreation field to introduce themselves. Until then, many barely knew one another. Each man openly shared his strengths and weaknesses, laying the foundation for mutual support over the next four years. Together, they resolved that no one would be left behind.

In prison culture, individual survival often takes precedence over group success.

Cohort 4 has chosen a different path. They are committed to unity and shared accountability. Chaztanious Blackburn believes that cohesiveness is "paramount, not only to our success, but to the program's as well." His words reflect that pledge each man made—to himself, to one another, and to the program as a whole. By investing fully in this second chance, they aim to create lasting change together.

An individual mindset can only take a person so far. Lasting success is rarely achieved alone. Recognizing the magnitude of their opportunity, each man embraced a collective consciousness for the greater good. Their mission is to change the narrative through shared effort—demonstrating the value of rehabilitation and the potential for meaningful contribution beyond incarceration.

True change begins with the willingness to listen. For Cohort 4, the initiative to succeed is rooted, not only in personal determination, but in collective purpose.



Holiday Party

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By **Tony Johnson**

Staff Writer, Cohort 4 Student, SCI

The students of Campbell University's Second Chance Initiative at Sampson Correctional did not waste time sitting around during their holiday break. Instead, they began building community through service with other residents at Sampson. The students exchanged the rigors of classes, papers, and studying for holiday party planning because they wanted to make an impact on other men's lives. In their first semester of college, these first-year students learned about the Campbell Hallmarks, including service to the community through calling. On Christmas Eve, the men applied these Hallmarks in an act of service by donating their time and resources to uplift others incarcerated with them during the holiday season.

On Christmas Eve 2025, students hosted an all-day dorm party. The event kicked off at 8 a.m. with a free refreshments table and continued drawing residents in until 8 p.m. Campbell students worked hour-long shifts, serving coffee and cookies to partygoers. The refreshments table also included card games and a guessing game. Participants guessed how many Peanut M&Ms and Reese's Pieces were in a jar filled to the brim. At the end of the night, the closest guess was 401—just three off the actual total of 398.

The atmosphere in the

block changed immediately with the hanging of announcements and decorations. "There were no holiday decorations in the dorm until we put out announcements with pine branches and hung holiday banners. The party decorations put the dorm into the look and feel of the holidays," said first-year Campbell student Mario Nebbitts. "In here, one day can blend into the next, but the holiday decorations signified that Christmas Eve was going to be different."

All 144 residents assigned to Dorm 3 were invited to share in the festivities and set aside the holiday blues. The holiday season can be an extremely difficult time for incarcerated individuals. Personally, when I think about the happiness of past Christmases with my family and the fact that I cannot spend time with them now, feelings of loneliness and despair can try to steal the joy of the season like the Grinch. Hearing about loved ones enjoying the holidays is bittersweet. I am happy for them, but I also wish I could be there to share those moments, knowing those memories will be cherished forever. One of the main reasons we hosted this party was to help keep the holiday blues away from others.

Block raffles throughout the day added to the excitement. Students conducted random drawings by bunk number for each block at three different times: 10:30 a.m., 3:30 p.m., and 6:30 p.m. Prize bags

included ramen, popcorn, Lance crackers, hygiene items, and scented oils. Campbell students enthusiastically announced each winner, adding to the excitement as recipients made their way to collect their prizes.



The idea for the block Christmas party originated with Rodrequis Calhoun, Tony Johnson, and Anthony Smith. We experienced similar block Christmas parties while housed at Nash Correctional Institution. The inaugural class of the North Carolina Field Minister Program began a tradition of hosting generous holiday parties in their housing units. Their self-sacrifice has since spread to other units at Nash. This year, the tradition expanded to Sampson Correctional and the Second Chance Initiative.

Campbell University graduate Mark Denning, who has been incarcerated for over twenty years, reflected, "I've been in prison a long time, but I've never experienced anything like this."

Holiday Party



Happiness and joy passed between students and residents, with little concern for the environment. The party served as a collective act of selflessness for the students of the Second Chance Initiative. All prizes, resources, and time were donated or raised by the students themselves, highlighting their commitment to building community. As students, we do not have to wait until after graduation or release to impact lives—it begins now.

The celebration also included other games open to anyone who wanted to attend. Cory Salerno welcomed a packed dayroom while hosting bingo, for which Michael Travalini spent hours hand-making supplies. Alejandro Chavez Gomez and Elijah Caldwell hosted Jeopardy to close out the evening. Two teams remained tied through several rounds of Final Jeopardy, sparking a lightning round. The goal of every event

throughout the day was simple: to have fun.

The party was such a success that even correctional staff began to notice the change in atmosphere. Shortly after arriving for the night shift, Officer Leggett said of the event, “It boosts morale.” The students embraced their calling by making the day about their fellow residents rather than themselves. There is no better way to make someone feel valued than to place them above yourself.

Next year, students hope to provide a free meal for all 144 men housed in Dorm 3 and offer even more raffle prizes. However, that is a significant challenge given limited resources. We believe it is possible with the support of a shared vision between Campbell University and Sampson Correctional administrators.



Seasonal Perspectives

By Cory Solerno
Cohort 4 Student, SCI

In an open field, a rabbit searches for food, lifting its head with its nose twitching as it takes in the fragrances of life beginning to blossom. A mockingbird flits from tree to tree, joyfully singing that spring has returned. As the daylight grows longer and life awakens

Inevitably, the seasons will continue to change, as will we during our time of growth at Campbell University.

for today's warmer, clearer skies. At Campbell University here at Sampson, this spring arrives with new horizons as well as familiar feelings of nostalgia.



2.



For those of us in Cohort 4, this season brings a fresh sense of accomplishment after successfully completing our first semester. While the newness of college is swiftly wearing off, our understanding is deepening as we begin to grasp what higher education truly is and where it might take us. The work asked of us is broadening our horizons and preparing us for the future.

For the upperclassmen in Cohort 3, this spring is one of their final seasons in the Campbell program at Sampson. The familiar rhythm of classes and discussions, followed by hours of reading and writing, is drawing to a close. The long-sought goal of earning a bachelor's degree is now within reach, and the memories and effort that have led them here

are at the forefront of their minds. The traditions and integrity these men have embodied throughout their education are now being passed on to those of us in Cohort 4.

Inevitably, the seasons will continue to change, as will we during our time of growth at Campbell University. Amid the beautiful chaos of each semester, we continue seeking a path toward brighter futures. Just as a person weaves through an overgrown path of tangled vines to reach a hidden sanctuary, so too do Campbell University students overcome the challenges of college life in prison to discover new perspectives and renewed hope.



Adult & Online Education

1. Image Courtesy of www.britannica.com, "Cherry tree blossoms"
2. Image Courtesy of www.britannica.com, "Common Mockingbird (Mimus polyglottos)."

The Unintended Consequences of Mandatory Minimums: Lost Incentives, Lost Potential

By Christopher Shipley

Lead Editor, Staff Writer,
Cohort 3 Student, SCI

I have been incarcerated for nearly two decades. During that time, I have witnessed many men serve their sentences while putting forth minimal effort to better themselves. I often ask myself: what motivates a person to become the best version of himself while in prison?

For me, the answer is simple. I want to build the best possible future for myself and reduce the likelihood that I will ever return to prison. Since entering the North Carolina Department of Adult Corrections in 2009, I have consistently held a job or been enrolled in school. I have earned my General Education Diploma (GED), participated in Campbell University's Second Chance Initiative to complete my associate's degree, and I am now working towards a bachelor's degree. I pursue these opportunities even though I know that no matter how hard I work, my release date cannot come any earlier than the mandatory minimum imposed at my sentencing.

Unfortunately, many incarcerated individuals do not see a reason to follow this path. Under North Carolina's Structured Sentencing Act, a person receives a minimum and maximum sentence. While incarcerated, individuals may earn gain time through good behavior, work assignments, and

participation in programs. However, regardless of how much gain time is earned, release cannot occur before the court-imposed minimum date (NCDAC). Once a person realizes that additional effort will not shorten their sentence, the incentive to go above the minimum requirements often disappears.

This is where mandatory minimums quietly undermine rehabilitation.



Supporters of mandatory minimum sentences argue that they promote fairness, transparency, and deterrence. Legal scholar Michael Tonry explains that proponents claim mandatory penalties ensure evenhandedness, make sentencing predictable and visible to the public, and discourage crime by increasing certainty in punishment (Tonry, 2009). Some policy makers also argue that mandatory minimums acknowledge public concern and affirm that lawmakers

are taking crime seriously (Tonry, 2009).

These arguments frame mandatory minimums as tools for accountability and public reassurance. However, decades of research suggest their effects are far less complicated—and often counterproductive.

Critics across the political spectrum argue that mandatory minimums fail to achieve their stated goals. One major concern is that they shift discretion away from judges and into the hands of prosecutors (Bjork, 2005). Because prosecutors control the decisions surrounding criminal charging, they effectively determine the mandatory sentence received. This dynamic can create disparities and reduce transparency rather than enhance it.

Scholars have also documented the disproportionate impact of mandatory minimums on racial minorities. Anne L. Foster notes that such sentencing policies have harmed racial minorities to such an extent that Michelle Alexander famously described them as a “new Jim Crow” (Foster, 2023, p. 127). In addition, mandatory minimums contribute to prison overcrowding by increasing sentence length and limiting opportunities for early release.

These structural critiques are well documented. Yet, there is another consequence that receives far less attention: the erosion of motivation inside prison walls.

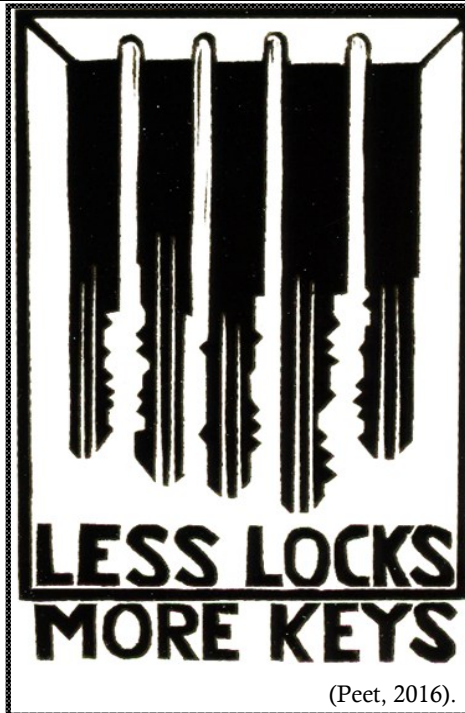
The Unintended Consequences of Mandatory Minimums: Lost Incentives, Lost Potential

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When a person knows that no amount of effort will move their release date earlier than the mandatory minimum, the incentive structure changes. Why pursue education beyond the minimum requirement? Why work harder than necessary? Why enroll in intensive programs if the reward—earlier release—is unattainable? Not everyone responds this way. Some individuals, like me, pursue growth for intrinsic reasons. But, prisons are shaped by collective behavior, not individual exceptions. When large numbers of incarcerated people feel that additional effort yields no tangible benefit, disengagement spreads.

An environment with diminished incentives often leads to idleness, idleness can foster frustration, resentment, and misconduct. Educational and vocational programs lose participants. Work assignments become perfunctory rather than purposeful. The prison becomes more difficult to manage, less focused on growth, and more centered on simply serving time.

The consequences do not



end at the prison gate.

If individuals spend years in an environment that does not meaningfully reward self-improvement, they may leave prison less prepared for employment, civic participation, and stable family life. Reduced programming engagement can mean higher recidivism risks which sentencing policies claim to reduce.

Accountability is essential. Crime harms victims and communities, and

punishment serves legitimate social purposes. But, a system that eliminates meaningful incentives for growth risks undermining public safety in the long term.

If rehabilitation is truly a goal of incarceration, incentives must align with that goal. When mandatory minimums cap the benefits of good behavior and sustained effort, they weaken one of the most powerful tools for change; hope tied to action.

The debate over mandatory minimums often centers on fairness, deterrence, and disparity. It should also consider motivation. A prison system that rewards transformation encourages individuals to invest in themselves. A system that limits reward to a fixed minimum may unintentionally cultivate stagnation.

The unfortunate reality is that, when people are released, society inherits the results of whichever of these two systems has prevailed.



SECOND CHANCE INITIATIVE

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Wiggins Memorial Library Symposium Participants

By Christopher Shipley
Lead Editor, Staff Writer,
Cohort 3 Student, SCI

It is a very distinct honor to have a professor to assess your work, deem its quality to be on a level that measures up to the academic excellence which is represented at Campbell University, then be willing to give that work their stamp of approval and nominate you to present your academic acumen alongside of an array of other great minds. It is truly humbling.

This year, there were three students at Sampson Correctional Institution to present at the 2026 Wiggins Memorial Library Symposium: Cohort 3 Juniors, Andy Locklear, me (Christopher Shipley), and Michael McCoy. We were nominated by the esteemed Dr. Sherry Truffin, and all three are extremely grateful to her for the consideration.

Andy Locklear's presentation centered around a



2026 Campbell University Academic Symposium

Ester H. Howard Student Research Fellows Program

Narrative From Nowhere: A Prisoner's Search For Home




Michael McCoy
Dr. Sherry Truffin
Campbell University Second Chance Initiative

novel written by Tommy Orange titled *There There*. Tommy Orange is a Native American author and finalist for a Pulitzer Prize, and his innovative novel interrupts clichéd narratives surrounding Native American history and identity to portray the fragmented realities of modern urban Native life. In the paper that he would be presenting titled, *Putting the Pieces Together from A Native Perspective*, Locklear argued that the post-modernist, disjointed structure dramatizes both the

regaining of voice and the clash of silence, dramatizing the fragmentation forced upon Native communities by way of colonization, enforced assimilation, and historical erasure. Locklear, a proud member of the Lumbee tribe, is perfectly suited to analyze this novel, and provide an extremely insightful take on this subject.

Alongside Locklear was Michael McCoy, who would be presenting the work that he has put forth in his journey to get his memoir, *Narrative from Nowhere: A Prisoner's Search for Home*, published. His work highlights how incarceration narratives are unique offerings, glimpses into the carceral experience ever since early Christian confessions, their spread to America, and accompany growing prison populations today. Smuggled out of prisons by sympathizers, incarceration narratives began as testaments of divine redemption then morphed into journals, diaries, and manifestos detailing

There There

- ❖ Set in Oakland, California
- ❖ Follows 12 interconnected Native characters
- ❖ All traveling toward the Big Oakland Powwow
- ❖ Themes: identity, trauma, belonging, survival

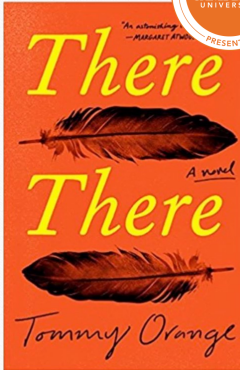



Image Courtesy of Bing.com



Wiggins Memorial Library Symposium Participants

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the moral, educational, and political atmosphere behind bars.

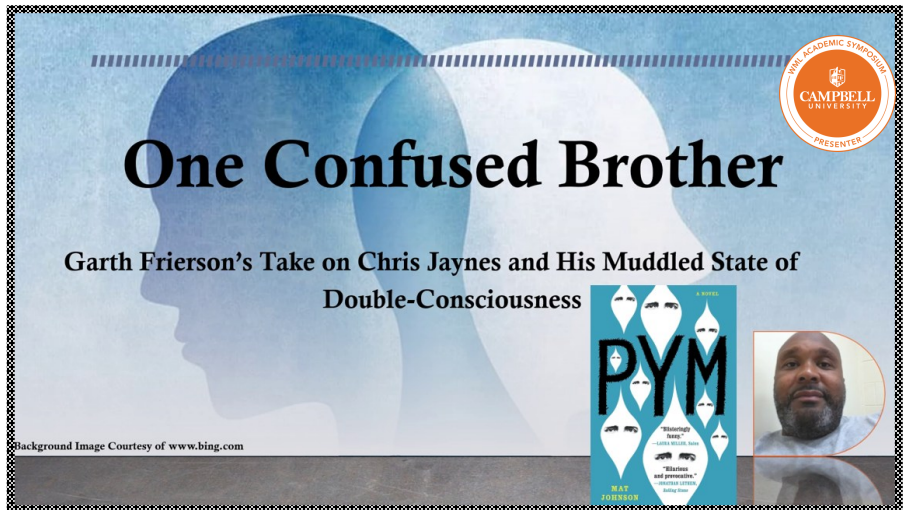
Michael's ultimate goal is to gain an understanding of where authors who are incarcerated belong among the wide array of literature that focuses on rehabilitation, and gain the editorial support it would require for him to take his place amongst them.

Michael's presentation earned him the honor of being awarded a merit award, placing his work in the top 25% of online video presentations.

I, Christopher Shipley, joined my fellow cohort brothers as a presenter at this year's symposium, and I cannot fully express how much of an honor it was to be chosen for a second year in a row.

This year, I presented a paper that I wrote which focuses on W.E.B. DuBois's theory of double-consciousness—"a sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity"—and how it relates to the protagonist of the satirical novel *PYM*, written by the mixed-race scholar, and American author, Mat Johnson (DuBois).

This character, named Chris Jaynes, was a mixed-race adjunct professor recently fired from a predominately White university, who had the goal of dismantling the systems that promote racial inequality. In my paper, I argue that, even though Chris Jaynes may know about



W.E.B. DuBois's concept of double-consciousness, he was woefully unaware about how it dictated his own actions and decisions, usually to the detriment of his ultimate goal.

I am grateful to have received a merit award for this presentation.

I think that I can speak for the other presenters from my cohort when I say that there is no greater sense of accomplishment than to have your work viewed and validated by your fellow scholars.

Shipley interviews McCoy
What was the most challenging part of this project?

By far, becoming comfortable with my own voice. By this I mean adjusting my attitude towards using the type of communication and language that would be necessary to affectively speak on issues of education. Prior to the presentation I was slightly unsure. However, I concluded my project and subsequent presentation with a full belief that: "I have something

important to say." Participation in both the Ester C. Howard Student Research Grant Program, and the 2026 Academic Symposium, put me in the vulnerable position of having to share my thoughts with others. Yet, with support from my mentor and cohort members, I arrived in the company of other brilliant minds and knew that I truly belonged. I am a capable person with great ideas to share with others.

What would you suggest to other students interested in being nominated for next year's event?

First, be nice to your professors! Second, use this opportunity to engage with your course work in ways that reflect your unique view of the world, and your place in it. There are too many copy cats in the world already. Let your brilliance shine in a way that years from now will make others say: "He was on to something..."

DuBois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Campbell Spirit finds a Home at Sampson

By Michael McCoy
 Assistant Editor, Staff Writer,
 Cohort 3 Student, SCI

As the progress of the Second Chance Initiative continues to set more benchmarks for what is possible here at Sampson Correctional Institution, one event that is continuing to garner support from residents and staff is the painting of the living quarters where Second Chance Initiative students retire after a long day of class. As the season changes and the spring flowers return, the residential dorms have also changed, as the recent scenery is a herald of good things to come for our program.

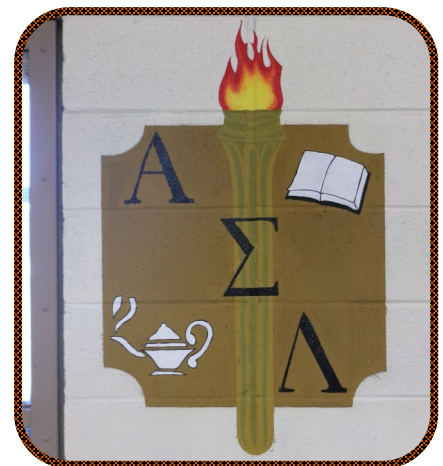
With the blessing from the facility warden, Robert Van Gorder, painting began in early spring as an extended partnership between the Second Chance Initiative and the Sampson Correctional Institution Art Club. As the early outlines for each piece were drawn over the familiar walls, residents from other parts of the facility stopped by to have a look. Each visitor provided an opportunity for current students or alumni to share information about Campbell University, and for the artist involved, including recent graduate Mark Denning, to tell how the program has led him to serve as a positive example for others.

In addition to the Campbell University seal and Alpha Sigma Lambda Crest, already on display, Senior Jeffery White remained busy



with another large mural depicting the face of our own Gaylord imposed on an outline of the Tarheel state. The bright Campbell Orange is a welcome break from the somber hues traditionally found in correctional settings. Senior Andy Locklear swears that the new paint job keeps him in a more positive mood throughout the day. Mario Nebbitts, a freshman in his third semester in the program, remains “blown away” at the talented artist, but also connected with how the art work relates to his educational journey. It all about painting a new picture and not remaining bound by old ideas.”, Nebbitts said.

The finished artwork will hopefully instill a message in others that life never comes full-blown for others to see. Life requires a plan, a sketch, and a good eraser. But it is the vision of having something positive and meaningful to share with



others that keeps all of the artists involved in this project motivated, and as such should all our progress through life carry a similar tone.

Striving for Excellence: President 's and Dean's List Honors

By Christopher Shipley
Lead Editor, Staff Writer,
Cohort 3 Student, SCI

In higher education, earning a place on the Dean's List or President's List is widely recognized as a mark of academic excellence. It signals discipline, intellectual ability, and a drive to sustain commitment. Yet, for students enrolled in Campbell



University's Second Chance Initiative these honors represent something far greater. They are not only academic milestones, but powerful symbols of resilience, transformation, and hope achieved under some of the most challenging conditions imaginable.

Despite the structural limitations of incarceration—restricted movement, limited access to technology, and the psychological strain of confinement—students in this program consistently demonstrate exceptional academic performance. In traditional college settings, students often benefit from access to libraries, internet resources, study groups, and flexible schedules. In contrast, incarcerated students must navigate strict institutional routines, limited educational materials, and, at times, unsupportive or even hostile social environments.

And yet, Second Chance

students don't only succeed, they excel. In the 2025 fall semester, multiple students between Sampson and Anson Correctional Institutions earned Dean's List or President's List honors. More broadly, the initiative reports an average GPA of 3.75 among its students, reflecting a sustained culture of high achievement. These accomplishments are not anomalies—they are evidence of what is possible when opportunity meets determination.

Importantly, these academic honors carry meaning beyond grades. They represent personal transformation. Many incarcerated students enter the program after years—sometimes decades—away from formal



education. Re-engaging with rigorous academic material requires not only intellectual effort but also the rebuilding of confidence and identity. Success in this context signals a shift: from being defined by past mistakes to being recognized for present achievement and future potential.

Faculty and administrators involved in the program often describe student achievements as inspiring in light of the challenges and circumstances that they are faced with. This sentiment reflects a recognition that these accomplishments are earned under conditions that would challenge even the most prepared traditional

ACI AS Cohort	
Term GPA	Cumulative GPA
3.82	3.82
ACI BS Cohort	
Term GPA	Cumulative GPA
3.9	3.59
SCI AS Cohort	
Term GPA	Cumulative GPA
3.7	3.7
SCI BS Cohort	
Term GPA	Cumulative GPA
3.9	3.88

students. Maintaining high academic standing while navigating incarceration requires discipline, focus, and resilience at an exceptional level.

Ultimately, when a student in the Second Chance Initiative earns a place on the Dean's List or President's List, it is not just an academic distinction—it is a testament to human potential. It demonstrates that, even in environments defined by limitation, individuals can pursue excellence, redefine their paths, and achieve at the highest levels.



These honors deserve not only recognition but celebration. They remind us that education is transformative, that opportunity matters, and that excellence can emerge even in the most unlikely places.



Cohort 1 Receives Expert Career Advice

By Anita Mobley

Cohort 1 Student, ACI

As you can probably imagine, expert advice can be hard to come by in the prison environment. However, on November 18, 2025, third-year Bachelor's students enrolled in Professor Macon Hollister's *Topics in Social Work* course—taught on Campbell University's ACI campus located in Polkton, North Carolina—discovered that there was no shortage of guidance or of experts willing to share what they

“Each of the students expressed an interest in broadening their understanding of what it's really like to prepare and go on to work in the helping profession as counselors and peer support specialists. “

have learned through more than three decades of combined experience in fields including social work, substance abuse, addiction, family and group counseling, education, and criminal justice.

Students from Campbell/ACI Cohort 1 hosted and participated in an exploratory career counseling and advisory event designed to provide insight into substance misuse counseling careers involving work with individuals whose lives have been impacted by substance abuse and addiction. The event was facilitated and moderated by Anita Mobley, a member of ACI's Campbell



Cohort 1 and a student in Professor Hollister's *Topics in Social Work* course.

Guest speakers included two ACI staff members—ACDP Program Coordinator Ms. Nancy Webster, MA, CADC, LCACA, and Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor Ms. Khysha L. Wise—as well as Campbell University Professor of Social Work Macon Hollister, who also serves as a Mitigation Specialist with the Federal Public Defender's Office. Collectively, these professionals bring more than 60 years of experience in the helping professions, particularly in the field of substance use and addiction.

Professor Hollister received her Master of Social Work degree from Columbia University, and her career spans more than a decade of working with justice-impacted

individuals throughout North Carolina and New York's prison and legal systems. She has dedicated her career to advocating for individuals in a variety of settings who have been impacted by alcohol and other substance use disorders.

With such a wealth of collective experience available, students felt confident they would benefit greatly from the opportunity to participate in a Q&A session with this panel of experts in social work, criminal justice advocacy, and substance use counseling. The concept for this event emerged from classroom discussions in which students explored possible career paths following their anticipated graduation in 2027 from Campbell University with Bachelor's Degrees in Communication Development Training and minors in Addiction Studies.

Cohort 1 Receives Expert Career Advice

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Students expressed a strong interest in broadening their understanding of what it is truly like to prepare for and work in the helping professions as counselors and peer support specialists. With this goal in mind—and through student, faculty, and interdepartmental collaboration with ACI's ACDP counselors—the event produced meaningful benefits for all who participated. The Q&A session provided a wealth of information for students to consider and also highlighted their eagerness to further apply and expand upon concepts learned during their academic studies. Below is an example of insights gained from the Q&A session with Professor Macon Hollister and ACDP counselors Ms. Nancy Webster and Ms. Khysha L. Wise.

Q: What was your primary reason for working with persons who struggle with substance addiction in a counseling setting?

A (Wise): “I don't know that it was a conscious decision as much as it was a need. There was a job opening and I applied, but once I got there, I was introduced to therapeutic community and I really wanted to be a part of that process because I think we have so diminished and lost the understanding of how powerful community really is [related to importance]. I really wanted to be a part of that. This is my passion.”

Q: Due to its growing nature and popularity, do you foresee opportunities for peer support specialist positions being integrated into the North Carolina prison system, and if so, what would that look like?

A (Webster): “It's already started. The role of peer support specialists has already been incorporated and adapted into the ACI ACDP program. Once a person completes a 15-month to two-year ACDP program, the facility is already utilizing those individuals as peer support specialists. Upon an individual's release, we continue to help people become certified and look for work that leads them in that direction.”



**CAMPBELL
UNIVERSITY**

Students at Anson Participate in the Academic Symposium

By Lakon Huff
Cohort 2 Student, ACI

So, I would just like to start out by saying that I am extremely proud of everyone that is in Cohort 2 here at Anson! We have definitely built a family within our classroom, which is something that I never thought was possible. I went through most of my schooling not

taking classes seriously and being more worried about my social status than my academics. Now that I am being given a second chance, I realize how much I appreciate this opportunity. I also see this within my classmates, not only in my Cohort but in Cohort 1, as well.

Now, on to the reason I am writing this article...five of my classmates in Cohort 2 have been



Students at Anson Participate in the Academic Symposium

inducted into the 2026 Wiggins Memorial Library Academic Symposium! I want to give a shout out to Aubrey Williams, Montaisha Sutton, Madison Harrington, Jessica Nash, and Brandi Grainger for being part of this year’s nominees. These students were nominated by Professor Clayton, our Christianity professor. According to the Campbell website, “As an Academic Symposium presenter, you are showcasing some of the best student work at Campbell University.” These exemplary presentations will be judged and evaluated alongside students from Campbell’s main campus by Campbell faculty members. All

“Every single one of these students are devoted to being exceptional. They have gone above and beyond what is expected, always taking their academics to another level.”

students who participate will receive constructive feedback on their presentations. Presentations scoring in the top tenth percentile at the

undergraduate and graduate/professional levels will receive High Merit awards. The presentations scoring in the top twenty-fifth percentile will receive Merit Awards. High Merit winners and Merit awardees are published in the Campbell Accolades.

These students are making history by being the first nominees from Anson. Not only are they nominees for this prestigious opportunity, but all five of these students have made the President’s List by maintaining a 4.0 GPA. This whole experience has been thrilling for me because I am a witness to how hard these

students have worked on their presentations. Each one reveals a glimpse into their individualistic thought processes. Countless hours have gone into these projects. “Is this the right font?” “Does this picture look good here, or would it look better over here?” “Does this background clash with

Sisyphus to life. Jess is a font of endless knowledge. This is also her first time ever doing a PowerPoint but her intelligence and need for perfection shines through. Brandi is dedicated and passionate about everything that she does. She is able to take the



my pictures?” These are just a few of the questions that were asked during the creative process. These students care about what they are doing and value everyone else’s opinions, as well. The comradery and friendship that we have within our Cohort is amazing.

These values contributed to the nominations of these students. Aubrey is headstrong and empathetic. She dedicates her time to helping and encouraging everyone around her. Tai is eccentric and resilient. She is a natural born leader. When she gets on the microphone, everyone listens. Madii is not only profound but creative which is revealed through her work. Her meticulous artistic abilities and her sense of humor bring the metaphor of

story of Hosea from the Bible and relate it to the struggles she has endured in her own life. Not only has she overcome but she is persevering by making changes in her life to be a better person for herself and everyone around her. Every single one of these students are devoted to being exceptional. They have gone above and beyond what is expected, always taking their academics to another level.

I want to wish Aubrey, Tai, Madii, Jess, and Brandi good luck on their Academic Symposium journey! Good luck to all other participants, as well!



A Visit from the First Lady

By Anita Mobley
Cohort 1 Student, ACI

Wednesday, February 25, 2026, is not likely to be a day soon forgotten by the inmates or staff at the Anson Correctional Institution, a prison facility located in Polkton, North Carolina. On this memorable date, North Carolina's First Lady, Anna Stein, wife of Governor Josh Stein, made her 28th visit to one of North Carolina's 55 North Carolina Department of Adult Correction facilities.

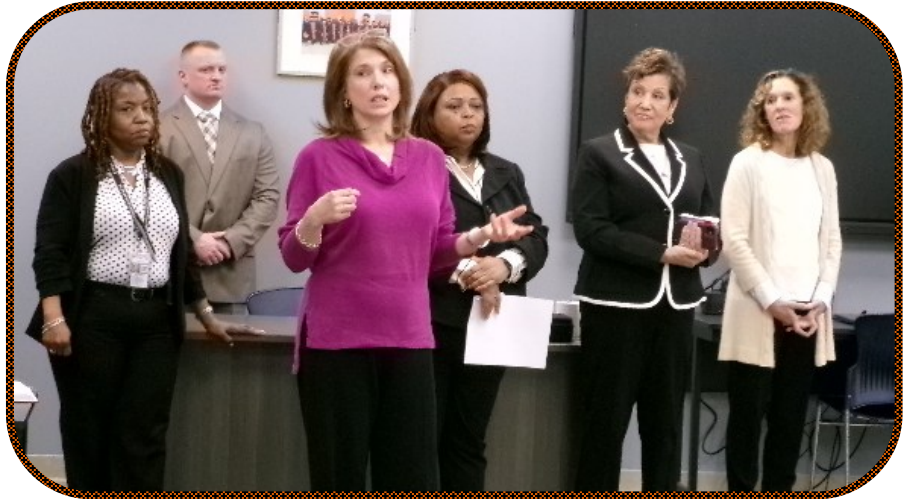
While many were surprised by the visit, it was becoming increasingly routine for the First Lady, who was accompanied by a full security detail and joined by staff members from ACI, including Wardens Torres, Rogers, Williams, and Mims, Dr. Brooke Wheeler, Operations and Human Services Division Director, as well as other guests and visitors.

First Lady Stein's visit to ACI, along with her previous visits over the past year to many of North Carolina's rehabilitative and correctional institutions, reflects both her dedication and the administration's statewide commitment to creating safer communities. This effort focuses on supporting incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals with tools and resources to succeed after reentry, including improved educational opportunities, job readiness programs, and access to essential mental health services.

As a member of North Carolina's Joint Reentry Council, the First Lady has worked collaboratively with the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction—particularly its Reentry and Rehabilitation division—as well as with the

creators of the Reentry 2030 Strategic Plan, a national initiative led by the Council of State Governments. The initiative aims to improve reentry and reintegration outcomes by encouraging states to adopt ambitious, measurable goals that drive system-wide change.

This work is designed to



strengthen rehabilitation and reentry services for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals in North Carolina through coordinated directives developed in partnership with cabinet agencies, the Office of State Human Resources, and the North Carolina Post-Release Supervision and Parole Commission, according to the NCDAC's official webpage.

The purpose of the First Lady's visit to ACI aligns with the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction's goal of making the state the first to develop a dashboard that tracks progress toward objectives, strategies, and metrics established in its Reentry 2030 Strategic Plan. During a recent Joint Reentry Council meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina, First Lady Stein stated:

"I was excited to be a part of the launch of the dashboard at

our recent Joint Reentry Council meeting.

"Providing incarcerated people with the tools and resources to succeed after reentry is crucial, whether through job readiness or mental health services. This dashboard is a valuable resource to ensure we stay on track for Reentry 2030 and additionally aims to

improve rehabilitation and reentry services for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people in North Carolina through specific directives developed in partnership with each cabinet agency, the Office of State Human Resources and the Post-Release Supervision and Parole Commission." (North Carolina Health News, 2026.)

During First Lady Anna Stein's visit to ACI, she also spoke with students from Campbell University's cohort program and participated in a panel discussion with incarcerated women about their challenges and hopes for the future. Throughout her time as First Lady, she has focused on strengthening support systems for individuals preparing to reenter society after incarceration.

The Latest Honor Society Inductee

By Christopher Shipley
Lead Editor, Staff Writer,
Cohort 3 Student, SCI

In November 17, 2025, the Sigma Gamma Honor Society at Campbell University gained one more prestigious member when David Conard was inducted via an online ceremony. The ceremony was conducted by Campbell University's Dean of Adult and Online Education, Ms. Nicole Winget and Assistant Dean of Adult and Online Education, Ms. Kelly Morin.

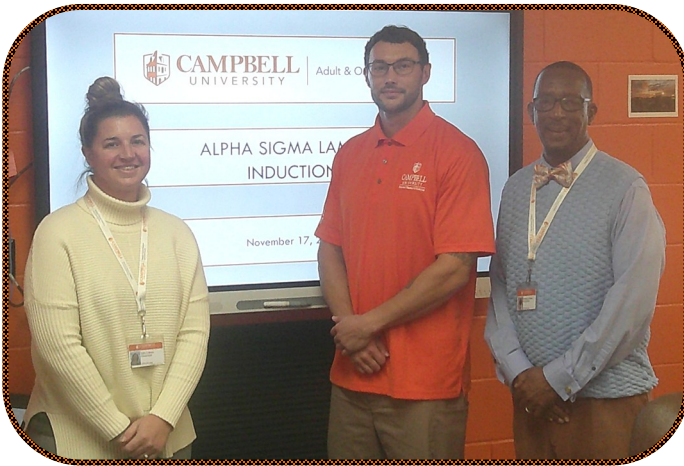
The hard work and dedication that it takes to achieve this honor

cannot be understated. In order to qualify for this honor a student must maintain a 3.50 grade point average and place in the eightieth percentile of all adult and online education students that do qualify.

Well deserving of this honor, David has maintained a level of academic excellence that would be extremely difficult to duplicate under the best of circumstances. Yet, through the many difficulties of his situation, he has striven to reach beyond what many would consider satisfactory to excel in his studies, and beyond.

Being a member of an honor society is to be a member of a tight

knit community, and David has joined his cohort brethren Jeffrey White, Andy Locklear, and Christopher Shipley in this brotherhood of excellence. No doubt, David is honored to have been inducted into this prestigious society; likewise, the society and all of its members should be extremely proud to have him as an embodiment of the continued excellence that they represent.



Left: David Conard (Middle), with Kelly Morin and Anthony Faison



Right: David with his fellow honor society members (from left) Jeffrey White, Andy Locklear, and Christopher Shipley.

A Narrative from Nowhere: A Prisoner's Search for Home (Excerpt)

By Michael McCoy
Assistant Editor, Staff Writer,
Cohort 3 Student, SCI

I'll admit it. At times, I'm not the most studious member of my cohort. I turn in assignments at the last moment or sometimes doodle during a slow lecture when all I can think about is what's new in the

commissary. But through all of my procrastination, I recognize the need to quantify my college experience in ways other than a mere pursuit of good grades. Therefore, I often stress that students should have fun during their short stay in college and reflect on using this time as healing, as I did during my Ester C. Howell Research Grant,

which aimed to record my journey as a resident student. Here are excerpts from my memoir, *Narrative From Nowhere: A Prisoner's Search for Home*:

"The in-between years, the liminal years between when I first entered the system to when I sat in a classroom and tried to figure it all out, built up. Those years weighed heavily—

A Narrative from Nowhere: A Prisoner's Search for Home (Excerpt)

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more than I imagined—not only on the scale of how I saw myself, but how I saw myself after twenty-six years behind bars, when I calculated whether more of my life lay behind bars or in stories I'd tell to someone else about how I survived. In prison, men depend on the university of self-knowledge and the discipline to grind themselves into autodidactic agony, alongside a fear of being overwhelmed by bricks and bars that hold a certain comfort. An education achieved alone, against all odds, when the common

Over two hundred men across the state applied to the program. It was providence that I was selected and that change was found in a classroom.

agreement—a contract between the student and the teacher, a bond of allegiance during a contest between two institutions: college and prison. This is a divine contract because education and faith are equally yoked. Both desire the face of God. Through either of these two aims, I sat in a college classroom inside a prison, where I was expected to spend the rest of my life.

Over two hundred men across the state applied to the program. It was providence that I was selected and that change was found in a classroom. This fate, I reasoned, was ironic because I was adamant I had changed very little over the years, and because school was the exact place where I imagined the process of criminalization began for me—

just as it did for other kids who fell asleep in a state home and woke up in prison. Kids who would later try to kill themselves figuring out what went wrong, where it went wrong, and who was supposed to be there to stop it from happening. So if my criminalization began in school, that great place of being appraised alongside other children, I didn't measure up...

...Campbell University was a Christian school, and even though my professors declined to wear a cross so as not to upset the metal detector, I assume they prayed in the parking lot—a whisper for wisdom to defeat whatever ignorance was lurking on the yard. I also assumed the professors who come to prison to teach find inspiration in students who attempt reform by attaching classroom lessons to their personal lives in ways students on campus would not. That internalizing *Othello* or Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages meant more than a good exam grade. But I'm sure there were fears as well: students asking why, if they make the Dean's List, they still can't go home; or fear that between juggling lesson planning, advocacy, conspiracy, and power dynamics, speaking strongly against police brutality might land them in the warden's office, accused of smuggling in an idea during a lecture. Or fear that, for students, teaching is something done to them or for them rather than *with* them. And of course, for female professors, fear that students will fall in love.

What I really wanted to



know: could a professor out-teach prison? And did leaving the free world behind and passing through the metal detectors signal that they believed college-in-prison was a critique of punishment? Were they on my side? In short, I wondered if my professors would give

me something that would last on the yard and defeat the idea that education and indoctrination stem from the same word. Or did some of them wish to hear more recycled rumors scraped off the yard and passed around class, where they would listen and grow closer to a world that was interesting, but one they never wanted to touch or have follow them to the parking lot?

Teachers who found us safer as students than seeds of hope. But for all the professors, I think it was important that I didn't receive them all the same. I wasn't sitting at my desk with an open heart and mind, willing to accept everything that fell from their mouths. Because despite my curiosity on certain subjects and need for an advocate, parts of me were washed over by the thought that when school was over, I'd be back on the yard."

Sometimes it's easy to get lost in the hustle and bustle of classes and forget both what life was like before this opportunity and what lies ahead. To this end, I extend encouragement to all Second Chance Initiative students and hope that you all stay connected to your dreams and to your curiosity for learning.

'Professors of the Semester'

2025 Fall Semester



Special Recognition, by the students of Cohorts 3 & 4 to professors Doctor Kathryn Lopez and Professor Maggie Payne for providing curriculums that were engaging and insightful, and displaying dedication to the success of their students which extended well beyond what would be expected or required.



"Profesora Payne's attention to detail in lesson planning, combined with her interactive classroom, made for a semester of challenging and cool learning."

"What truly sets Dr. Lopez apart, however, is her commitment to her students. She creates an environment where everyone feels respected and heard..."



Prof. Maggie Payne
SPAN-201: Intermediate Spanish I

Dr. Kathryn Lopez
CHRS-125: Intro to Christianity

Most Outstanding Professor

The Students of Cohort 3 Award This Certificate To

Prof. Maggie Payne

For recognition as the most outstanding professor of the fall 2025 semester, acknowledging her unparalleled preparation, thoughtful insight, and exceptional engagement.



Most Outstanding Professor

The Students of Cohort 4 Award This Certificate To

Dr. Kathryn Lopez

For recognition as the most outstanding professor of the fall 2025 semester, acknowledging her unparalleled preparation, thoughtful insight, and exceptional engagement.



Una Profesora Magnífico: Prof. Maggie Payne

By Michael McCoy
*Assistant Editor, Staff Writer,
 Cohort 3 Student, SCI*

Over the last semester, Cohort 3 had the pleasure of receiving instruction from Profesora Maggie Payne. Her recognition here is a small token of appreciation for her efforts while



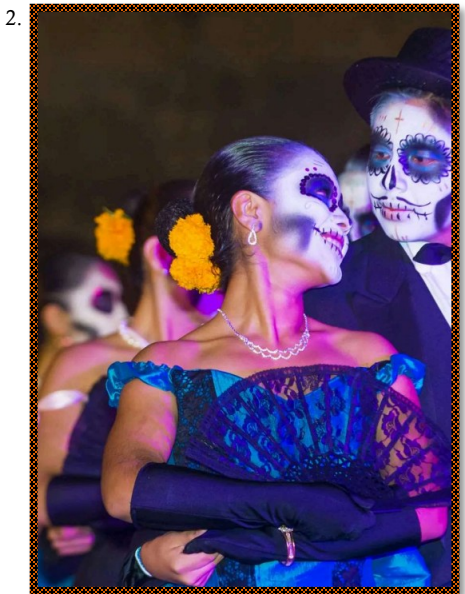
sharing with us Spanish culture, its language, its people, and the deep cultural traditions which make up a world of vibrant blend of sights, sounds, and personalities that have stood the test of time.

From our *Puntos* text, the worlds of Columbia, Puerto Rico,

Costa Rica, Venezuela and of course Mexico were brought to life, among others. Together we learned the nuances of local communication, and tasted regional foods whether tamales, ceviche, or arroz con pollo, that prove a whole world roams inside the languages we speak, and every word spells a rich history that even today, sadly, some are unaware of.

While not new to Sampson and the Second Chance Initiative, this class was taught virtually, yet Profesora Payne’s attention to detail in lesson planning, combined with her interactive classroom, made for a semester of challenging and cool learning. Particularly helpful were the assessments, which allowed us to survey our own beliefs and misconceptions of the Spanish language that is spoken by over 500 million people in the world. Witnessing Profesora Payne’s love for the language and

its people, today we are inspired to thank her for her time and energy with wishes for her continued success in instruction. ¡Pura Vida!



1. Image Courtesy of www.bing.com
2. Image courtesy of www.britannica.com, “Day of the Dead.”

One Magnificent Professor: Dr. Kathryn Lopez

By Christopher Shipley
*Lead Editor, Staff Writer,
 Cohort 3 Student, SCI*

Dr. Lopez has been voted “Professor of the Semester,” and for her students, the recognition comes as no surprise. Teaching Intro to Christianity, she brings a level of depth, clarity, and passion that transforms the classroom into a space of genuine discovery.

Students consistently express appreciation for her ability to make complex ideas accessible without ever oversimplifying them. Her lessons on the origins of the Bible challenge assumptions and open minds, encouraging critical thinking and thoughtful discussion. Many students note that they leave her



class not only with new knowledge, but with a deeper curiosity about history, faith, and interpretation.

What truly sets Dr. Lopez apart, however, is her commitment to her students. She creates an environment where everyone feels respected and heard,

fostering meaningful dialogue even when perspectives differ. Her encouragement inspires confidence, and her dedication reminds students that their education matters.

For individuals in the Second Chance Initiative, education represents opportunity, growth, and hope. Dr. Lopez embodies all three. Her impact extends far beyond lectures and assignments—she motivates her students to think differently, strive for more, and believe in their ability to succeed.

Being named “Professor of the Semester” reflects the profound difference she makes every day.

Image Courtesy of www.britannica.com

By Scott A. Spencer

Cohort 4 Student, SCI

Believe Me...
 The world may count you out,
 But I will not give up on myself.
 Believe Me...
 This is not the end,
 God has bigger plans.
 Believe Me...
 Look up and remember who you
 are.
 Believe Me...
 You are not the sum of your faults
 and failures.
 Believe Me...
 God is preparing you for a reason.
 This pain you are feeling is only
 for a season.
 Believe Me...
 I will trust you God,
 Even though I feel down.
 Better days are coming.
 Believe Me...
 You are doing your best
 in the season you're in.
 Believe Me...
 Gods' plan will work itself out.
 It is all in His hands,
 no matter what I do.

Believe Me...
 You are thriving.
 Life is what you make it.
 Believe Me...
 I believe in you,
 even when it is hard to believe in
 yourself.
 Believe Me...
 Life is only 10%,
 And the other 90% is how I respond
 to it.
 Believe Me...
 This is not the end.
 Dust yourself and try again.
 Believe me...
 You can do anything that you put
 your mind into.
 Believe Me...
 You may feel lost right now,
 Be patient,
 Your path will realign as you grow.
 Believe Me...
 I do not know what the future holds,
 But I am excited to see what happens
 next.
 Believe Me.



“Believe Me” was created to not just to be a poem, but to also be used as a motivational tool when life seems to become too difficult. It encourages you to allow yourself some grace when confronting your mistakes. Imagine being alone, looking at yourself in the mirror, feeling discouraged. What are some things that you can tell yourself to get motivated and build confidence?

Poem: Second Chances

By Tremayne Izzard

Cohort 1 Student, ACI

Someone stoked the	Coals of empowerment,
Embers, barely glowing,	Hearts of flames!
Cloaked in ash	Anson and Sampson,
Others used to	Now blazing trails,
Narrow their existence	Consumed by knowledge.
Down to sentences.	Educated and educating-
	See us PROSPER!

Fighting Time

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By Jessica Walker
Cohort 2 Student, ACI

All of the days run together. One after another they fall like dead soldiers on the battlefield of my mind. These days are my enemy, standing between my freedom and me. So, I struggle on against the time like a foreign invader in my homeland, and the frontlines slowly—oh, so slowly—advance in my favor. But at what cost? The battle is not without casualties. The faces of dead loved ones I will never see again wrestle for prominence in my mind against the imagined childhoods I will never share with my daughters. I've lost my life, though I am still alive. I've lost my mind, though I still imagine a life beyond this war. The pieces of myself that have survived thus far have grown hardhearted to time's pleas for mercy. So, we take no prisoners, offer

no quarter, attacking each day ruthlessly, refusing to submit, and praying for light beyond these trenches. All the time, knowing that if we—if I—give up today's fight, the war will never end.



Image Courtesy of www.britannica.com, "The Persistence of Memory."

Poem: Lumbee Tears

By Scott A. Spencer
Cohort 4 Student, SCI

We were two lonely souls moving through time and space,
Now we are trapped in time and truly out of place.
Walking the streets full of misery and tears,
Every night alone, strangled by our fears.
Drowning ourselves in destruction and doubt,
Never feeling what real love is about.
Where we come from, we do what we must,
Surrounded by broken promises and lust.
We find each other on the same lonely path,
And share the same problems when it comes to math.
We still hear the sound of Sandys music playing in our ears,
Where there is a parking lot full of cars and beers.
The soundtrack to many drunken nights and fist fights,
When the smokers come out and the thieves delight.
Even in your darkest hour, I still wanted you,
To put our hearts together to see what it would do.
Dreams of holding you in my arms,
Forever keeping you safe from harm.

Look into my heart and you will find,

A burning desire to call you mine.
Far from loving you in secret anymore,
Willing to give you something that you never had before.
On the other side of Keyser street where it all starts,
Pretty Lumbee footprints left in my heart.
Its only a matter of time,
Before I can hear you say that you're mine.

I will swim though oceans and walk through fire for my beautiful Berkeley Queen.
Behind the Center of your love I will be waiting for you
with the brightest destiny ever seen.
With my arms open wide,
I will be by your side,
To wipe away your warm Lumbee Tears.

Image Courtesy of www.Bing.com



The Ink that Glowed

By Christopher Shipley

Lead Editor, Staff Writer,
Cohort 3 Student, SCI

In D-wing, rumors spread quickly—but none stranger than the one about the glowing ink.

They said if you studied long enough, if you read not just with your eyes but with your soul, the words would begin to change.

He didn't believe it.

He barely believed in anything anymore.

He had signed up to the prison college program for one reason only: to escape the noise of the yard. Books, at least, didn't demand anything from him.

Or so he thought. The first time it happened, he was reading late at night, tracing a passage about transformation. The letters shimmered—just for a second—and rearranged themselves into something else entirely.

You are not finished.

He blinked. The words snapped back to normal. He laughed it off. Lack of sleep. Too much thinking.

But it kept happening.

In his psychology textbook, a paragraph shifted to reveal a memory he'd buried—a moment from childhood when he'd wanted to be a teacher. In

his literature class, poems whispered lines that weren't printed, lines that felt written specifically for him.

At first, it unsettled him. Then it intrigued him.

He began to study harder, chasing those moments. And the more effort he gave, the more the ink responded. It glowed faintly now, a soft blue

“But never entered.”

“Why now?”

“Because you started learning—not just consuming.”

The figure handed him a book. Its cover bore his name.

Inside were chapters he hadn't lived yet—pages describing a future where he mentored others, where he stood in front of classrooms, where his past wasn't erased but

transformed into something meaningful.

He snapped back to his cell block, heart racing. The textbook lay open in his lap, ordinary again.

But he wasn't.

From that night on, he approached every assignment like it mattered—because maybe it did in ways he couldn't fully

understand. The glowing ink appeared less often, as if it no longer needed to convince him.

Years later, when he finally walked out of prison, he carried no glowing books.

But sometimes, when he wrote lesson plans or graded papers, he swore he saw the ink flicker—just briefly.

A reminder.

That knowledge wasn't just power.

It was magic!



light only he seemed to notice.

One evening, while working on an essay, the words didn't just change—they expanded. The page became a doorway, pulling him into a vast library unlike anything in the prison.

Shelves stretched infinitely. Books hovered midair. Figures cloaked in light moved silently between aisles.

“Where am I?” Eli asked.

“A place you've always had access to,” a voice replied.

Image Courtesy of www.britannica.com, “Fantasia”

More than a Game:

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What Fantasy Football Taught Us about Teamwork and Connection

By Christopher Shipley
Lead Editor, Staff Writer,
Cohort 3 Student, SCI

When the season began, it looked like just another fantasy football league—draft boards, player stats, weekly matchups, and a whole lot of trash talk. But as the weeks unfolded, something deeper took shape. What started as competition became a shared experience that strengthened interpersonal communication, built new relationships, and created a sense of unity among all of the new and old students who were involved.

Fantasy football is often seen as a game of numbers, but it is just as much about people. Season-long fantasy leagues—especially those played among familiar groups—create consistent opportunities for social interaction and connection. The Second Chance Initiative Fantasy Football League serves as a productive outlet for the participants to interact and compete in a healthy manner, which required everyone to remain engaged with one another over the course of the football season. In an environment where meaningful connection can be limited, this kind of ongoing interaction matters.

Throughout the season—through trade negotiations, lineup debates, and weekly conversations about wins and losses—our league became more than a scoreboard. It became a space where concepts learned in



interpersonal communication and teams and small groups were constantly put into practice. These interactions required patience, listening, and sometimes compromise. Whether making a trade or discussing a close matchup, participants practiced negotiation skills and learned how to communicate clearly and respectfully.

Most importantly, the league fostered a sense of belonging. With the introduction of 15 new students to the Sampson, Campbell University family, weekly matchups gave everyone a reason to check in, share opinions, and stay involved; which in turn, helped to form new relationships. Even friendly competition—trash talk included—became a tool for connection. These shared moments created inside jokes, traditions, and memories that extended beyond the game itself.

There were lessons in both victory and defeat. Winning required humility; losing required resilience. Participants learned to manage

emotions, handle disappointment, and celebrate others' success. These are not just game skills—they are life skills.

By the end of the season, the standings told one story—but the experience told another. The real outcome wasn't just who finished first. It was the growth in communication, the development of mutual respect, and the stronger sense of community that emerged among everyone involved.

In a setting where second chances matter, experiences like this remind us that growth doesn't only happen in classrooms. It happens in shared challenges and in the simple act of staying connected.

Fantasy football may be a game—but for those who played, it became something much more meaningful.



By Corey Salerno
Cohort 4 Student, SCI

College can be demanding, and by the end of a long week, students look forward to the small pockets of rest the weekend provides. For many of us, Saturday nights offer exactly that: a chance to unwind, connect, and escape—if only for a few hours—through



anime.

At midnight, a dedicated group gathers in the dayroom to watch Toonami, Cartoon Network's late-night anime programming block. Long-running favorites like *Bleach*, *Naruto*, and *Demon Slayer* have set the tone, and this season we've been following *Blue Lock* and *Tokyo Revengers*.

Blue Lock centers on a young soccer player striving to earn a place on Japan's national team. Inside an intense, competitive training facility, he must prove himself as the top striker among hundreds. While

the show highlights ambition and rivalry, its deeper message—teamwork and perseverance—hits close to home. As students, we are part of a cohort, navigating challenges together and relying on one another to succeed. Watching these characters push toward a shared goal mirrors our own journey toward earning our degrees.

Tokyo Revengers takes a different approach, blending action with reflection. The story follows a man who gains the ability to travel back in time after a near-death experience, hoping to save someone he lost. As he works to change the past, the show raises familiar questions about regret, second chances, and personal growth. It

serves as a reminder that while



our past shapes us, it does not have to define our future.

Looking ahead, many of us are excited for the upcoming season of *Dan Da Dan*, a series that mixes supernatural chaos with humor and an evolving coming-of-age story. Beneath its fast-paced action are questions that resonate deeply: Where do I belong? Who matters most?

These questions feel especially significant in a college environment. We are all working to build a future, to find our place, and to contribute meaningfully. For those of us navigating additional challenges, that sense of belonging can feel more complicated—but no less important.

For a few hours each Saturday night, anime offers more than entertainment. It creates space for connection, reflection, and a shared sense of purpose—something we carry with us long after the screen goes dark.

Images Courtesy of www.Bing.com

Book Review: Summary and Thoughts, *Convictions of a Chef*

Page 25

By Alejandro Chavez Gomez
Cohort 4 Student, SCI

Convictions of a Chef begins with the author, Evan Marcus-Rotman, being arrested at his home, taken away from his son, brought to jail in Los Angeles, California, and eventually appearing in court for sentencing. Rotman describes life inside prison, including the

"I believe Mr. Rotman's life serves as a powerful example of how people are capable of rebuilding their lives at any point, and that meaningful

tedium of day-to-day routines and the issues that inevitably arise. His experiences feel relatable and grounded.

During his time there, he becomes involved in the jail kitchen, which serves as his introduction to cooking.

Upon his release, Rotman work at a vegan restaurant, where the owner inspires him to challenge himself and develop efficiency in the kitchen. This encouragement helps solidify his newfound direction and drive to become a professional chef. He goes on to attend the California Culinary Academy (CCA), where he gains valuable knowledge both in the classroom and through an internship in New Orleans.

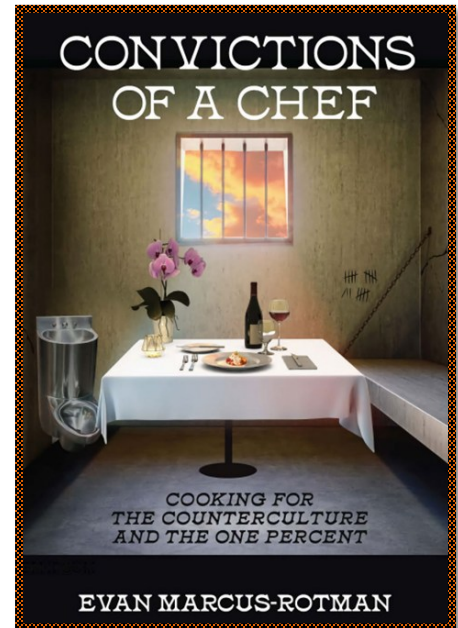
Rotman's newly developed skills allow him to move beyond his past mistakes and empower him to forge a new path. He works in a variety



of settings, including restaurants, retirement homes, yachts, and exclusive events such as music festivals. Along the way, he travels the world, connecting with people from different cultures, experiencing new foods, and seeing new places.

I found the book to be highly entertaining and authentic. I especially appreciated the author's lighthearted tone, which at times addresses more sensitive topics, such as caring for family and dealing with health issues. I believe Mr. Rotman's life serves as a powerful example of how people are capable of rebuilding their lives at any point, and that meaningful change is always possible. I hope that our own stories can similarly inspire others and serve as a reminder that, wherever we choose to go from here, we should strive to do our best.

I also believe that

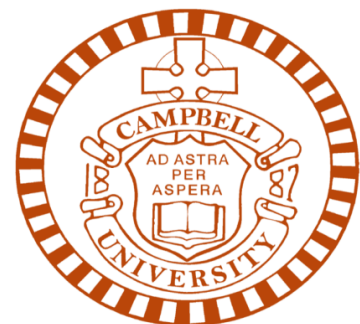


Campbell University is providing me with the skills necessary to succeed in life, even while incarcerated. Having the opportunity to continue developing as a lifelong learner is one of the most valuable aspects of the program for me, and I saw a similar journey reflected in Rotman's story.

Overall, this is a great read, and I highly recommend it to anyone who is in a season of rebuilding or seeking inspiration.

Image Courtesy of Ebsco Host. Evan Marcus-Rotman. (2023). *Convictions of a Chef: Cooking for the Counterculture and the One Percent*. Iguana Books. EBSCOhost.

<https://research.ebsco.com/c/kh5635/ebook-viewer/epub/nv6yp5umv/section/top>



As the Lead Editor of the Trailblazers Newsletter, it is my goal to continue the tradition of producing an informative and impactful publication, that represents the thoughts and ideas of the Second Chance Initiative student body, while adhering to the standards relevant to any form of work that is related to Campbell University. It has been an honor and a privilege to have had the opportunity to assist each and every Campbell University student here at Sampson Correctional in creating this outlet that provides such a wonderful platform for us to share ourselves with the rest of the Campbell University community, and whomever beyond those borders may happen to peruse these pages. Thank you readers for allowing each of us to open our selves up to you. **GO CAMELS!!**



Chris Shipley
Christopher Shipley

It was a very special experience putting this edition of the Trailblazers together. Being able to provide the thoughts and ideas of scholars from both Sampson and Anson Correctional was an honor for me. This program is so special to me for being in a position to witness the outpouring of intellectual aptitude that it inspires. Having this platform to be able to share that with the rest of the Campbell University Community is an honor and a privilege, and I will continue to do my absolute best to continue this tradition in the most artful and creative manner that I possibly can. Thank you .



Superintendent

Mr. Robert Van Gorder

Assistant Superintendent

Ms. Janet Dexter

Campbell University Staff

Ms. Kelly Morin

Mr. Anthony Faison

Ms. Makeba Johnson

**The Trailblazers Newsletter
Mission Statement:**

Provide timely and useful information regarding Campbell University's Second Chance Initiative that assists in promoting positive culture change, academic excellence, and social consciousness, constructively changing the lives of the students and communities that it touches.

