



# PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER PRISON

## Harnessing the Power of Education to Change Lives

“I remember the day I was accepted as a UNO student. I was in my cell when I got my UNO welcome letter and student ID number. I started to see a better future for myself. I felt like I’d just received a million dollars in cash.”

Since 2017, the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) Transforming, Renewing, Achieving and Connecting (TRAC) has been providing college classes for incarcerated students at the Omaha Correctional Center (OCC). TRAC offers post-secondary, for-credit general education classes on-site for incarcerated individuals.

### PROVIDING A TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCE

TRAC provides incarcerated students with educational opportunities to build their confidence and capacity to succeed academically. It fosters a learning environment focused on building intellectual skills, making connections through diverse sources of knowledge and engaging in critical reflection of self and society.

The program operates through funding from private donors. To date, 340 incarcerated individuals have enrolled in the 27 courses offered since the inception of the program, and 80% of enrollees have completed the classes. Courses offered have included English, chemistry, public health, sociology and math. Credits earned are transferable into UNO course credits and other programs, allowing incarcerated individuals to continue their academic path upon release.

### THE NEED

TRAC has received overwhelmingly positive responses from OCC students, who have been engaged, motivated



and appreciative of the opportunity. In addition to a high completion rate, grade point averages range between 3.3 and 4.0. Nearly 80% of the students surveyed said they definitely want to continue their studies after their release, while the others indicated that they would probably continue.

Thanks to a generous private gift to establish TRAC in 2017, classes are provided to incarcerated individuals at OCC at no cost to them. However, providing these classes is not without cost; expenses run approximately \$100,000 a year to provide courses.

The University of Nebraska Foundation, in coordination with the UNO School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, seeks generous donors to endow a \$2 million fund that will allow TRAC to operate in perpetuity in its present form. This endowment will provide the support that will allow TRAC to operate at the level necessary to qualify for Pell Grant funding.



*“When you’re in prison you feel like you don’t belong to anything, but UNO made me feel like I belonged to something.”*

Current UNO student, formerly incarcerated at OCC

## THE BENEFITS OF PRISON EDUCATION

Each year, Nebraska discharges more than 2,000 individuals from incarceration. Unfortunately, approximately 30% of those released will return to prison within three years.

Research suggests correctional programming, especially prison-based higher education, reduces the likelihood of re-offending and helps individuals find employment upon release. Studies also reveal that education has intergenerational impacts, improving the future outcomes of not only those currently in prison, but also their children.

## NEXT STEPS

To maintain and expand the TRAC program, additional private funding is needed to cover the annual \$100,000 cost to operate the program for the next three to five years. During this period, TRAC leaders hope to qualify for Pell Grant funding to offset the tuition costs of incarcerated individuals.

Your consideration of a gift to help TRAC reach more individuals is greatly appreciated. Investments in this program will help to make generational changes for incarcerated individuals, their families and the communities in which they work and live once they leave the corrections system.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Gifts to support the TRAC program will help to develop a long-term, sustainable model. It will also help to cover the tuition costs for each class by supporting the



teaching faculty and funding learning materials, such as class supplies and textbooks. The average class costs \$20,000 and enrolls an average of 15 students.

Your gift to TRAC will help to provide incarcerated students with the education that can promote self-efficacy and confidence. This transfer of knowledge has the potential to spark a continuation of this educational journey upon release and help to reduce recidivism rates. It will also help reduce the state’s costs to manage overcrowded prisons while helping Nebraska fulfill its urgent need for skilled labor.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. With your investment, more people can be reached, more lives changed and more communities improved.

## ONLY *in* NEBRASKA

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