

OUR NEXT CHAPTER 2026–2028

Strategic Plan



Michigan Consortium for Higher Education in Prison

OUR STRATEGIC ROADMAP

Preamble

This plan prioritizes evolution over revolution, building on the 2023 – 25 foundation. It serves as our second formal roadmap as we appoint our new president.

Vision

Restoring dignity, personal agency, and economic opportunity through higher education.

Mission

MiCHEP advocates for the transformative power of higher education to improve the lives of incarcerated students, benefiting corrections staff and Michigan taxpayers. We believe college-in-prison restores personal agency and ensures successful reentry as informed, capable citizens.



Strategic Goals

Educational Parity

Solidify prison campuses as true extensions of colleges & universities with high-quality instruction and support services.

Digital Equity

Optimize and scale access to sustainable, multi-campus software solutions mirroring the main campus experience.

Aligned Pathways

Align pathways with the Offender Success Framework to turn degrees into economic opportunities post-release.

Educator Ecosystem

Cultivate professional mastery and specialized pedagogical standards for adult learners in correctional settings.

Policy Catalyst

Solidify MiCHEP as a strategic leader, utilizing data to drive statewide advocacy and sustainable funding.

FOUNDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

Core Beliefs



Collective Identity: Our strength lies in our membership, respecting diverse institutional missions.



Power of Convening: We serve as a one-stop contact for state partners, streamlining collaboration.



Bridging Silos: Affinity groups help transform institutional efforts into a cohesive ecosystem.



Education Parity: Prison education must mirror the quality and rigor of the main campus experience.



Cross-Partisan Stability: We build transparent relationships to safeguard sustainability through transitions.



Reentry Catalyst: Removing barriers creates career pipelines and engaged, informed citizens.



Untapped Potential: Higher education restores personal agency and dignity for a common good.

Strategic Pillars

1. Advocacy

Data-Driven
Advocacy and
Systemic
Integration

2. Excellence

Institutional
Parity and
Curricular
Excellence

3. Success

Professional
Pathways and
Post-Release
Success

4. Capacity

Organizational
Capacity and
Sustainability

Philosophy

MiCHEP champions the transformative power of higher education, cultivates personal agency, and unlocks economic opportunity for incarcerated students and communities across Michigan.

Section II: Comprehensive Plan & Supporting Narrative

The following pages provide a deeper explanation of the strategic pillars, actionable objectives, and contextual analysis supporting the two-page executive framework.



Michigan Consortium for Higher Education in Prison

2026–28 Strategic Plan

Preamble

This Strategic Plan marks the next chapter for the Michigan Consortium for Higher Education in Prison (MiCHEP), serving as the organization's updated roadmap. We are kicking off this three-year plan with the appointment of our first full-time president. Yet, it builds directly on the foundation established by the first plan (2023–25), which the Vera Institute of Justice facilitated. The 2026–28 plan prioritizes evolution over revolution, ensuring a natural progression of MiCHEP's existing work rather than a pivot toward wholesale new initiatives. By maintaining this continuity, we remain a stable, membership-driven consortium, striving to be insulated from political change and dedicated to our enduring mission.

Vision

Restoring dignity, personal agency, and economic opportunity through higher education.

Mission

The Michigan Consortium for Higher Education in Prison (MiCHEP) advocates for the transformative power of higher education to improve the lives of incarcerated students and their communities, benefiting corrections staff and Michigan taxpayers. MiCHEP believes that college-in-prison can restore personal agency, dignity, and economic opportunity for incarcerated students. A college education can help ensure successful reentry into society as informed and capable citizens committed to the common good.

Core Beliefs

The Michigan Consortium for Higher Education in Prison (MiCHEP) is guided by these fundamental beliefs, which inform our advocacy, our collaboration, and our commitment to the students and institutions we serve:



Collective Identity: We believe our strength lies in our collective identity as a membership organization. We respect the diverse missions of our member institutions, which include liberal arts, professional, faith-based and community colleges and the unique role each plays in local workforce and community development. We believe that convening these voices creates a more robust and effective educational ecosystem.



Power of Convening: We believe that our greatest impact is achieved through the power of convening. By bringing institutions together, MiCHEP serves as a one-stop point of contact for the Department of Corrections and other state partners, streamlining communication and collaboration among all stakeholders.



Bridging Silos: We believe that through the facilitation of affinity groups and other professional development opportunities, we bridge institutional silos, identifying, refining, and sharing best practices. When we work as a unified group, we help transform institutional efforts into a cohesive, statewide ecosystem of success.



Education Parity: We believe that education in prison must match the quality and rigor of the main campus experience. We are committed to academic parity to the extent possible, prioritizing synchronous instruction and high-quality student support services as the benchmarks of our programs.



Cross-Partisan Stability: We believe meaningful change requires stable, cross-partisan partnerships. By building transparent, reliable relationships with the Department of Corrections and state and federal leadership, we safeguard the promise that college-in-prison remains sustainable through political transitions.



Reentry Catalyst: We believe that higher education is a catalyst for successful reentry. By removing barriers to attainment, we create career pipelines that create engaged, informed citizens.



Untapped Potential: We believe every person has potential. Higher education is a transformative force that restores personal agency and dignity, offering individuals the opportunity to reshape their futures and contribute to the common good.

2026-28 Strategic Goals

GOAL 1: COMMIT TO EDUCATIONAL PARITY

Transition from establishing congruence to fulfilling the promise.

- **Aspiration:** Solidify prison campuses as extensions of the main campus. This will ensure that every student, regardless of facility, has access to quality instruction, library resources, and student support services that uphold the same standards as those on the main campus.
- **Key Focus:** Facilitate the expansion of diverse academic offerings that match the depth and quality of main-campus instruction. Parity should also be defined to mean a high-quality environment tailored to the correctional setting, including student clubs and leadership opportunities.

GOAL 2: OPTIMIZE AND SCALE DIGITAL EQUITY

Transition from implementing technology to ensuring equitable digital access.

- **Aspiration:** Bridge the digital divide in prison by ensuring that digital technology is not a special project, but a standardized tool implemented in partnership with MDOC and available to all students to access high-quality teaching, research, curriculum materials, and faculty mentoring.
- **Key Focus:** Move beyond hardware installation and digital access to sustainable, multi-campus software and learning management solutions that mirror the main campus digital experience.

GOAL 3: ALIGN PATHWAYS

Bridge the gap between the classroom and the community.

- **Aspiration:** Work with the MDOC and other partners to incorporate higher education into the “Transition” and “Community” phases of the Offender Success model. This aims to turn degrees into economic opportunities by linking students to workforce strategies and community roles after release.
- **Key Focus:** Establish a formal degree-to-career pathway within the Reentry Plan.

GOAL 4: CULTIVATE A SPECIALIZED EDUCATOR ECOSYSTEM

Transition from onboarding staff to professional mastery.

- **Aspiration:** Advance the specialty of post-secondary prison education in Michigan by facilitating a Community of Practice (CoP) or an affinity group for faculty delivering college in prison. This will assist faculty and support staff in effectively navigating MDOC's unique environment while upholding the highest standards of pedagogical excellence. Share pedagogical standards specifically for adult learners with shorter career trajectories, moving beyond traditional 18- 23-year-old student models.
- **Key Focus:** Host annual workshops and convenings and share best practices in co-curricular engagement, creating a Michigan-specific pedagogical standard.

GOAL 5: SOLIDIFY MICHEP AS A POLICY CATALYST

Transition from being a trusted source to being a strategic leader.

- **Aspiration:** Collaborate with the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) to leverage available data and insights for statewide advocacy. This collaboration can provide a robust evidence base for legislative advocacy and long-term sustainability initiatives, particularly for mitigating waitlists. By working together, we can position MiCHEP as a key advocate for member institutions, effectively contextualizing national trends and resources within Michigan.
- **Key Focus:** Influence of the state budget and policy decisions to ensure higher education remains a lasting pillar of Michigan's public safety and economic growth strategy. MiCHEP can help ensure a unified message to state and federal legislators, prevent disparate institutional lobbying, and lift all members together. MICHEP should be the go-to organization for information about college-in-prison.

2026-28 Philosophy

MICHEP champions the transformative power of higher education, cultivates personal agency, and unlocks economic opportunity for incarcerated students and communities across Michigan. We help improve prison culture for everyone, including correctional staff. We are dedicated to fulfilling the promise of higher education by ensuring that the path to a degree is purposeful and self-determined.

We partner with the Michigan Department of Corrections to align high-quality academic pathways and bridge the gap between the prison classroom and the community. We help ensure that higher education serves as a pillar of successful reentry and active citizenship.

2026-28 Pillars and Strategies (Three-Year Implementation Plan)

STRATEGIC PILLAR 1: DATA-DRIVEN ADVOCACY & SYSTEMIC INTEGRATION

Transition from sharing information to becoming the main policy architect for Michigan's college-in-prison system.

Actions

- **Unified Data Architecture:** Transition from basic data collection toward longitudinal tracking that aligns with Michigan's Sixty by 30 goal, measuring the impact of higher education on recidivism and employment. This can help to link data to waitlist mitigation more directly. Establish a longitudinal data-sharing agreement between MiCHEP, MDOC, and the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) to track economic and civic engagement outcomes.
- **Legislative Leadership:** Lead advocacy efforts to secure permanent state-level funding and to ensure incarcerated students are fully eligible for all state tuition assistance programs (such as the Michigan Achievement Scholarship), creating a policy landscape that promotes quality higher education in prison.
- **Presidents' Council:** Establish a council to convene the presidents of all member institutions and MDOC leadership to ensure high-level alignment, resource commitment, and strategic oversight. This creates a formal way to keep presidents engaged over the long term.

STRATEGIC PILLAR 2: INSTITUTIONAL PARITY & CURRICULAR EXCELLENCE

Ensure that increased access means the same level of academic rigor and co-curricular enrichment as a main campus.

Actions

- **Digital Equity Scale-Up:** Standardize secure digital tools across member institutions to ensure students have the main campus resources necessary for high-level scholarship.
- **Parity:** Establish a MiCHEP-approved standard that moves toward instructional quality and student support services that are on par with non-prison campuses.

STRATEGIC PILLAR 3: PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS & POST-RELEASE SUCCESS

Transform degrees into definitive career pipelines.

Actions

- **Offender Success Framework Alignment:** Formally partner with the MDOC to integrate academic milestones into Reentry Plans.
- **Pathways:** Formalize and develop pathways for applied learning and for graduates in prison and beyond in a manner consistent with their education.
- **Employer Network:** Partner with Michigan-based businesses to build relationships and a MiCHEP employer network, linking graduates to the economic opportunity promised in the vision statement, and expanding career options for students.
- **Alumni Agency:** Formalize an alumni advisory board (leveraging groups such as the Student Voice Councils) to advise on MiCHEP programming and priorities and to mentor current students.

STRATEGIC PILLAR 4: ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY & SUSTAINABILITY

Establish MiCHEP as a self-sustaining organization.

Actions

- **Organizational funding:** Develop a diversified funding stream to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- **Student Funding:** Shape strong public-private partnerships and advocate for state funding to support our students' success.
- **Executive Leadership:** Fully commit to a full-time executive role (President), currently funded by the Mellon grant, transitioning the organization from a volunteer-led steering committee to a staffed professional entity.
- **Operational Model:** Finalize a long-term operational model that defines MiCHEP's identity as an independent 501(c)(3) entity.
- **Educator Ecosystem:** Develop a specialized certification or professional development series for faculty across all member colleges.
- **Waitlist Mitigation:** Use data to advocate for facility expansions or innovative 2- and 4-year partnerships to address the unmet demand of potential students on waiting lists.