

EDUCATION PROGRAMS ASSOCIATE

JOB OPENING



The Tennessee Higher Education Initiative (THEI) is a nonprofit organization working to disrupt systems of harm and create opportunities for autonomy and success by providing college access to people inside Tennessee prisons, preparing students for skillful re-entry, and reducing barriers to continued education and achievement. THEI is a grassroots, community organization committed to principles of harm reduction, healing, and centering the lived experiences of the people we serve. We engage in reimagining and building towards the world we want to see through systems work and direct service.

Tennessee Higher Education Initiative (THEI) seeks a full-time **Education Programs Associate** responsible for executing THEI's academic programs inside Tennessee prisons. Under the direction of the THEI Senior Manager of Education and Pre-entry Programs and in collaboration with site administrators, the EP Associate will coordinate day-to-day implementation of Bachelor's and Associate degree programs, facilitate communication between all stakeholders, and provide direct support services to incarcerated students who have limited access to communication or information channels.

This full-time, exempt position will require substantial car travel on a weekly basis to prison facilities and partnering colleges. Some overnight travel within Tennessee will be required. The ideal candidate could be based in any region of Tennessee. Apart from facility travel, the Associate's primary office location will be work-from-home or THEI's office in Nashville.

Priority will be given to applicants who demonstrate a strong commitment to providing educational opportunities to at-risk populations and understand the mission of THEI to be located within a larger social-justice movement. We seek applicants who have experience working in secondary or post-secondary education and/or working in a prison environment; flexibility with work hours including the ability to work nights and some weekends; excellent organizational and time management skills; and a strong commitment to breaking cycles of poverty and incarceration. Familiarity with TDOC practices and/or knowledge of the public higher education system in Tennessee are beneficial. The ideal candidate must have a reliable car, can drive to TDOC prisons across Tennessee, be comfortable working in a prison and collaborating with incarcerated individuals. **We encourage people who have been impacted by the criminal justice system to consider applying.**

ESSENTIAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Student Support & Academic Services

- Provide comprehensive advising and educational planning specific to the unique needs of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students to increase completion rates post-release



AUGUST 2025

- Build relationships and rapport with all THEI students across multiple cohorts and prison facilities using a trauma-informed, human-centered, strength-based approach
- Act as a regular tutor at prison campuses, providing direct educational support and academic coaching
- Serve as an advisor, liaison, and advocate for incarcerated people seeking to attend partner college institutions
- Onboard students into THEI academic programs and continue working with them through degree completion
- Facilitate the smooth communication of student needs and concerns to respective partners and work to resolve student challenges through collaborative problem-solving
- Facilitate College Prep program and oversee annual admissions process, maintaining meticulous records and managing multiple priorities with exceptional attention to detail
- Ensure students have access to educational materials, textbooks, and resources necessary to succeed in their courses
- Manage comprehensive student records, instructional materials, and academic documentation with attention to privacy and confidentiality
- Log contact notes in a timely manner, utilizing Salesforce and Google Drive systems for comprehensive case management
- Ensure all education information and data are maintained correctly in electronic and paper files for program evaluation and compliance
- Partner with the community to create and facilitate student success workshops and academic enrichment activities geared towards student interests and career goals
- Lead and manage student council groups and extracurricular activities that promote peer support and leadership development

Faculty & Instructor Coordination

- Communicate regularly with faculty as needed to ensure smooth implementation of courses and to mitigate possible disruptions
- Facilitate course delivery including professor accompaniment, preparing course packets and workbooks, uploading presentations, and gathering materials for student computer lab servers
- Ensure professors have the technology and materials needed to successfully teach their courses
- Facilitate Faculty Training and post-evaluation collection for all partner instructors prior to the start of each semester

College Partnership & Liaison Services

- Serve as primary liaison between incarcerated students and college partners, communicating key information and advocating for both student and institutional interests



- Work with partner campuses to provide outreach to students regarding THEI's academic programs and identify incarcerated people interested in post-release education opportunities
- Identify staff at partner institutions who will help formerly incarcerated people access and fully participate in college programs, either on campus or online
- Assist college partners with distribution and collection of course materials and supplies
- Support execution of colleges' administrative processes, including student rosters, roster changes, course adds and withdrawals
- Collaborate with college partners to host annual graduation ceremonies inside TDOC facilities
- Coordinate with college staff for data collection and program evaluation requirements
- Confer regularly with representatives from partner colleges regarding interpretation and implementation of program and institutional policies
- Network with other college navigators and academic coordinators to share best practices and facilitate connecting students with educational resources

Data Management & Program Evaluation

- Create and maintain student-specific data for process, program, and outcome evaluation to support continuous program improvement
- Maintain comprehensive records and update documents and record systems used by programs
- Digitize data for academic programs and coordinate with organizational staff for data collection and analysis
- Assist with scanning, anonymizing, organizing, and other administrative support tasks as required
- Support program evaluation and assessment activities through data management and systematic analysis
- Work in consultation with Senior Manager of EPP to implement sustainable, system-wide programming initiatives
- Adhere to FERPA privacy policies and best practices for storing and sharing sensitive materials

Event Coordination & Professional Development

- Collaborate with leadership team to organize and execute events both at prisons and in community settings
- Assist in planning and execution of commencement ceremonies at TDOC facilities for graduating students
- Support orientation of new students to programs at various facilities
- Provide support for extracurricular and pre-college activities including academic clubs, reading groups, and enrichment programs
- Actively participate in team meetings and attend related state and local conferences to stay current with best practices



- Network with other academic coordinators and education professionals to share resources and strategies
- Perform related duties as assigned to support organizational mission and program excellence

REQUIRED CAPABILITIES, SKILLS, & KNOWLEDGE

- Bachelor's degree in Education, Counseling Psychology, Program Administration, Social Services, or related field required
- 3+ years of experience within higher education in prison, reentry, social services, or related fields (preferred)
- Demonstrated ability to work with and gain the cooperation of people in a variety of organizations and positions, including academic institutions and human service organizations
- Experience providing trauma-informed, human-centered, strength-based approach to working with students and justice-impacted populations
- Proficiency in Google Suite, particularly Google Calendar, Sheets, Docs, and Slides; experience with Salesforce preferred
- Exceptional administrative, written, and verbal communication skills with ability to advocate effectively for student needs
- Ability and willingness to organize and manage complex data systems for program evaluation and student tracking
- Valid driver's license and reliable transportation for regular travel to prison facilities across Tennessee
- Flexible schedule including ability to work evenings and occasional Saturdays
- Timeliness around email correspondence and professional communication
- Investment in relationship-building and passion for creating partnerships with diverse populations and organizations
- Energy for creative problem-solving and navigating ambiguous situations with intentionality and judgment
- Thoughtfulness and critical understanding about the social and historical context of THEI's work
- Commitment to self-care, social justice, and equity
- Emotional intelligence with ability to balance healthy boundaries while maintaining professionalism with incarcerated student population
- Ability to follow guidelines from the Tennessee Department of Correction
- Flexibility to meet student needs and organizational changes with comfort taking appropriate initiative
- Ability to work effectively with diverse individuals and groups, balance competing needs, and employ objectivity
- Effectiveness with both independent and collaborative team work
- Must be eligible to be a badged TDOC contractor

Relational Requirements



- Collaborative and communicative approach to working across teams with proactive outreach and correspondence skills
- Ability to navigate challenging professional partnership relationships with respect and resourcefulness
- Openness to creative problem-solving and working in ambiguous situations
- Commitment to self-care and healthy boundary setting while maintaining professional relationships
- Willingness to co-create an "uncommon work culture" through shared commitment to community agreements

Social Justice Requirements

- Strong commitment to providing service to at-risk populations and understanding THEI's mission within the larger social justice movement
- Strong commitment to breaking cycles of poverty and incarceration
- Commitment to use Person First and humanizing language in all interactions
- Cultural competence in working with diverse populations and justice-impacted individuals

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

This is a full-time, exempt position with a salary of \$50,000 plus travel reimbursements, comprehensive medical/dental insurance, a monthly wellness stipend, Simple IRA with employer match, professional development opportunities, generous paid leave and holidays, and flexible work arrangements.

THEI is an equal-opportunity employer; all applicants will be considered for employment without attention to race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran or disability status.

Interested applicants should submit cover letter and resume to work@thei.org with "Education Programs Associate" in the subject line.

