



Prison Initiative Celebrates Graduation

The South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) held a special graduation ceremony for the second class of female inmates in the Columbia International University's (CIU) Prison Initiative program. The graduation ceremony began at 1:00PM on Friday, June 10, 2016 in the gym at Camille Griffin Graham Correctional Institution located at 4450 Broad River Road in Columbia, S.C.

The Prison Initiative is a faith based, two-year, Associate of Arts degree program designed to prepare inmates for ministry within the state's prison system. SCDC and CIU first joined forces in 2007 and started the Prison Initiative in SCDC's male institutions. Since the program began, a total of 124 male and female inmate/students have graduated, been assigned to dorms and are serving as chaplain's assistants in many of the Department of Correction's 23 institutions across the state.

"This collaboration with CIU has made a tremendous impact on offenders and our institutions," says SCDC Director Bryan Stirling. "The Prison Initiative increases the safety and security of our institutions while helping to lower recidivism in South Carolina."

With the proven success of the Prison Initiative for male inmates, the Department of Corrections and CIU implemented an expansion of the program to SCDC's female population in 2012. Of the Department of Corrections some 20,620 inmates, about 1400 are females housed in three different institutions. The second cohort of 14 female inmate/students will graduate in this class and be assigned to those institutions.

The commencement speaker for the graduation ceremony was Peggy Jones, a professor to the women participating in the prison initiative.

Students take courses in the Old and New Testament, History and English, among other subjects as they complete 70 undergraduate hours to earn their Associate of Arts degree. The goal is for the inmates to play a meaningful role in changing the culture of the overall prison population in South Carolina.

The Prison Initiative is supported by churches, businesses and interested individuals. By law, incarcerated inmates are not eligible for state or federal aid therefore their programs are entirely donor funded.

