



Division Chair's Corner

I am honored and excited to begin my term as Chair of the Division on Corrections and Sentencing (DCS). It is a privilege to serve such an engaged and dynamic community.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Eileen Ahlin, our past DCS Chair, for her guidance, support, and leadership over the past year during this transition.



Jill Viglione
DCS Chair

I am also extremely grateful to the members of the DCS Executive Board for their continued service and dedication to the Division. This year, we welcomed two new board members, Jess Grosholz and Clare Strange, who joined an exceptional leadership team that includes Debi Koetzle, Daniel Butler, and Janani Umamaheswar. I look forward to working alongside this talented group in the coming year.

I am especially encouraged by the level of engagement across our Division. This year, 68 members volunteered to serve on DCS committees, including 26 members who volunteered to serve on two or more committees! This level of participation is remarkable and reflects the strength of our community. If you have not yet had the opportunity to get involved, I encourage you to consider joining a committee this year. We would love to have you.

We are looking forward to another outstanding ASC conference this November in Chicago. Planning is already underway for DCS events, and we hope to see you there. Please consider submitting nominations for DCS awards. Our Division recognizes excellence across a wide range of areas, and we are proud to celebrate the important contributions of our members.

This year, we will also hold elections for three positions: Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer, and one Executive Counselor. Submit your nominations (including a brief bio and statement of interest) to Daniel Butler by August 31, 2026. Additional information about these positions is available in the DCS Constitution on our website.

Looking ahead, the Executive Board plans to distribute a Division-wide survey to better understand how we can support our members. As Chair, I am eager to hear your ideas, suggestions, and feedback. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out. I am committed to bringing member input to the Board and ensuring that our Division continues to grow and evolve in meaningful ways.

Finally, there are many ways to support DCS. We encourage you to consider purchasing DCS Volume 10: Handbook on Lived Experiences in the Justice System, renewing your membership, attending the ASC breakfast, and supporting student scholarship through contributions to the Ben Steiner Excellence in Corrections Student Paper Award Fund.

Please continue to stay connected through email and our social media channels, Twitter (ASC_DCS), Facebook, and LinkedIn (ASC Division on Sentencing & Corrections), for updates, opportunities, and events. Thank you for your continued engagement and support. I look forward to a productive and exciting year ahead.

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Research Note

Reflections on the Work of Peer Support Specialists in Correctional Settings

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Nyako Pippen
SCI Coal Township

Mental health issues are prevalent in prisons, with over half of incarcerated individuals reporting a mental health problem (Maruschak et al., 2021). However, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2021) reports that only 1 in 4 state prisoners with a mental health problem receives treatment. One way to address this gap is through the work of peer support specialists, individuals with a history of mental health problems who have been trained and certified to provide support to those in need of or receiving mental health services (Bradstreet, 2006). While peer mentoring has always occurred within the correctional system, in recent years, “shared lived experiences [as a] transformative intervention” has been recognized and formalized (Cortina & Muentner, 2025, p. 257). Peer support specialists in prisons can serve to help individuals develop more effective coping mechanisms and instill a sense of hope, empowerment, and motivation. It can also serve to help individuals develop a positive self-identity, which can be beneficial in supporting reintegration and reducing recidivism (Cortina & Muentner, 2025).

There are five key elements of peer support, according to Bradstreet (2006). They are mutuality, empathy, engagement, wellness, and friendship. Peer specialists “draw upon their lived experiences to share ‘been there’ empathy, insights and skills...[and] engage patients in treatment and help patients access supports [in the] community” (Chinman et al., 2008, p. 1315). It also provides individuals with the opportunity to “contribute or ‘give back’” in a meaningful way (Bradstreet, 2006).

SCI Coal Township, a medium-security prison in central Pennsylvania, currently employs approximately 20 trained peer specialists. Each peer specialist is assigned to a specific housing unit or other common area, i.e., the gym, library, medical department, intake and admissions, where they provide services based on request.

As a peer support specialist for three years, Nyako Pippen helps individuals with a variety of issues ranging from relationship matters to suicidal ideation. His approach focuses on self-empowerment and inspiring hope. He believes that the hardest part of facing a problem is not feeling like you can overcome it. This is what leads to despair and ultimately depression, and that is what peer support specialists are working to prevent. Nyako states, "What I like the most about being in peer support is being able to witness the diverse expression of strength. In support work, I encounter so many different scenarios where folks exercise strength to overcome some very difficult situations. It is my job to help folks tap into that inner strength to overcome these challenges and it's rewarding to see people discover their personal power. This encourages me and reinforces my own confidence in myself."

Peer support serves not just to benefit clients, but peer support specialists as well. Research finds that peer support specialists report "personal growth, empowerment, and a sense of fulfillment from helping others with similar backgrounds" (Cortina & Muentner, 2025, pp. 261–262). The training and experience can also provide employment opportunities upon release for those who want to continue this work. Nyako believes that this work has impacted his behavior in a positive way because he knows that others depend on him, and it adds another level of responsibility to his life.

There are many characteristics of those who make a good peer support specialist, such as patience, empathy, trustworthiness, and being a good listener and measured. However, Nyako believes that the core characteristic that ties all of these together is humility. He states, "This is very important because we encounter a lot of individuals with diverse backgrounds, views, beliefs, etc. and we have to remain humble so we don't diminish others' experiences. It's vitally important to validate what one is experiencing and remembering that problems are relative."

He states that his approach is to usually listen without expressing judgment. "Very often folks already have the answer to whatever they're facing and really just need to

be heard. When you hear someone without offering an opinion, it communicates to that person that you're willing to listen." He can relate to their experiences by being vulnerable and sharing his own experiences when the situation calls for it. He states that he doesn't want to make the conversation about him, but he also wants his peers to understand that he knows what they're experiencing in order to demonstrate that recovery is possible.

Bradstreet (2006) argues that peer support specialists were never intended to replace existing mental health services, but rather are designed to complement them, which Nyako agrees with. "I don't see it replacing counselors, however I do see it adding to it. In a lot of ways that's what we already do. For example, individuals can be suspicious of authority/power figures, which can affect whether they want to take their medication. Now, in no way do we give medical advice, however we do encourage individuals to explore their thinking patterns. This is helpful for when counselors talk to them, they're more inclined to adhere to their advice about medications."

Having a peer specialist program in an institutional setting, such as a prison, can have a positive impact on individuals addressing mental health problems, which can ultimately contribute to the overall wellbeing of society. While understandings of peer specialists tend to focus on individuals assisting those with a background of mental health issues, this article shows that peer specialists in correctional settings are unique in that they have to respond to both individuals with preexisting mental health concerns, i.e. a traditional diagnosis, as well as those who develop mental health issues stemming from their conditions of confinement, all while maintaining their own recovery. As this transformative intervention grows, we must think about how to refit our structures to aid peer specialists in a way that is diverse and reciprocal. Supporting peer specialists more broadly will address the prevalent mental health problems within prisons and promote positive reintegration into society.

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LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN DCS

The Division on Corrections and Sentencing (DCS) is seeking nominations for three Executive Board positions: **Vice Chair**, **Secretary/Treasurer**, and **Executive Counselor**. If you are looking for a meaningful way to contribute to the Division, expand your professional network, and help shape the future of DCS, we encourage you to consider running for office.

Serving on the Executive Board is an opportunity to support the Division's mission, represent the interests of our members, and help guide important initiatives and activities. We especially encourage nominations from members who have not previously served in DCS leadership, as well as those representing a wide range of research interests, career stages, institutional affiliations, and perspectives. Diverse voices strengthen our Division and help ensure that DCS continues to serve the broad community of scholars and practitioners engaged in corrections and sentencing. All positions are for two-year terms beginning in November 2026.

Nomination Materials: A brief biography and statement of interest

Submit Nominations: Daniel Butler, hdbutler@iastate.edu

Nomination Deadline: August 31, 2026

Whether you nominate yourself or a colleague, we hope you will consider helping shape the future of DCS through service and leadership.

Teaching Note

Teaching corrections through primary source analysis and a total institution framework

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Introductory corrections courses are often taught through textbooks and lectures covering punishment, incarceration, rehabilitation, and structure. That approach serves an introductory function, but it has limits. Students may leave with exposure to key concepts and models without closely examining how correctional institutions are organized, how they operate as social environments, or how their structures communicate assumptions about punishment and control. In my view, the teaching of corrections benefits when students move beyond summary to work directly with evidence.

My approach begins from a simple premise: students should do more than memorize what prisons are said to do. They should examine evidence and make reasoned judgments about how correctional institutions are structured and what those structures appear designed to accomplish. Inquiry-based learning paired with primary source analysis provides one way to make that shift.

Primary sources are original documents, images, artifacts, and records created through direct observation or participation at or near the time under study, rather than later summaries or interpretations. This matters in corrections because prisons are material institutions. Their barriers, corridors, cells, surveillance points, and architectural layouts are not incidental features. They reflect assumptions about authority, discipline, isolation, risk, and routine (Foucault, 1977). When students analyze primary sources directly, they interpret correctional institutions through evidence rather than summary. This approach treats corrections as an institutional environment to be examined rather than another topic to be covered.

Research on primary source pedagogy suggests that this kind of work can support analytical skill development, student-centered inquiry, and disciplinary literacy through structured engagement with evidence (Fry, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2019; Withers et al., 2023). The Library of Congress similarly frames primary-source learning as a process that moves students from observation to questioning, inference, and evidence-based interpretation (Library of Congress, n.d.-a). In corrections, that sequence of inquiry is useful because institutional life is organized through space, visibility, classification, and control.

One useful entry point is prison architecture. When students compare Bentham's (2011) panopticon with designs associated with the Pennsylvania system, they are not merely reviewing familiar names from correctional history or theories of surveillance and discipline. They are examining different ways of organizing observation, separation, and control. That distinction matters pedagogically. It moves the discussion from description to analysis. What can be seen from a central vantage point? How is prisoner contact limited or prevented? What kind of order is built into the structure itself? What theory of punishment seems to be embedded in the design? These are the sorts of questions that move students from recall to interpretation.

A similar strategy can be applied to solitary confinement. In my own teaching, I structure the analysis in stages. The first stage is observation. Students identify the visible features of the space, including size, materials, openings, light, and evident restrictions. The second stage is inference. At that point, students ask what would be difficult to do in the room, what forms of contact are constrained, and how the arrangement regulates movement and sensation. The third stage is interpretation, during which students consider what the space was designed to do. The final stage is conceptual, where the discussion moves outward to larger questions about punishment, reform, control, and the prison as a total institution (Goffman, 1961). This sequence gives students a structured path that moves from observation and description to investigation and interpretation.

For example, when studying the Pennsylvania system, students can analyze Library of Congress images of Eastern State Penitentiary.[1] Using a photograph of an 1830s "feeding hole" (Highsmith, 2019), they might begin with observation by identifying the small opening and its relation to the surrounding space. They can then move to

[1] Eastern State Penitentiary images suitable for classroom use can be located through the Library of Congress' digital collections. See <https://www.loc.gov/photos/?q=eastern+state+penitentiary>.

inference by asking what kinds of contact this design allows while minimizing direct interaction. From there, the discussion often turns to interpretation and concept, considering what such a feature suggests about separation, control, and the management of daily life confined to a total institution.

Primary sources are not limited to photographs or drawings alone. Metadata shapes how correctional history is described, classified, and understood. This allows students to examine not only the artifact itself, but also the language through which institutions classify and represent carceral life. Library of Congress primary source analysis tools and National Archives worksheets provide students with structured frameworks for analysis (Library of Congress, n.d.-b; National Archives and Records Administration, 2023). What is named, emphasized, and omitted is relevant to inquiry and helps students see how institutional knowledge about prison is framed.

The primary source approach has clear applicability in the corrections classroom. Introductory students often encounter prison as an abstract topic discussed at the level of policy, reform, and operations. Primary source analysis makes the institution more concrete. It directs attention to the constructed environment, documentary evidence, and the representational dimensions of disciplinary power. In doing so, the concept of the total institution becomes less abstract for students. As a result, students can appreciate that prison is not simply a place where punishment occurs, but a closed institutional world that organizes movement, contact, visibility, routine, and social relations (Goffman, 1961).

It is worth noting that this approach does not eliminate the role of lecture or textbook material. Secondary sources remain necessary for context, terminology, and subject-matter framing. The point, however, is that primary sources change the student's relation to the material. They ask students to work with evidence to build understanding rather than simply receive conclusions. That shift has pedagogical value and fits the content of introductory corrections, where lessons on institutional design, institutional purpose, and institutional power are central. For that reason, primary source analysis offers a useful way to teach corrections through the total institution framework rather than only as a body of information.

Note: This teaching note grew out of a recent workshop presentation: Roberts, N. C. (2026, March 28). Teaching introductory corrections through inquiry-based learning and primary source analysis: A workshop model. Pennsylvania Association of Criminal Justice Educators annual conference, Seton Hill University.

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DCS AWARDS



Lifetime Achievement Award

Honors a lifetime of distinguished scholarship and contributions to the field of corrections and sentencing.

Eligibility: DCS member with at least 20 years of scholarly contributions. Retired scholars are eligible.

Materials: Nomination letter and curriculum vitae.



Distinguished Scholar Award

Recognizes a sustained scholarly career in corrections and sentencing, with particular emphasis on a significant scholarly contribution made within the past five years.

Eligibility: DCS member with at least eight years of postdoctoral experience.

Materials: Nomination letter and curriculum vitae.



Distinguished New Scholar Award

Recognizes exceptional early-career contributions to corrections and sentencing research and service.

Eligibility: DCS member with fewer than eight years of postdoctoral experience.

Materials: Nomination letter and curriculum vitae.

DCS AWARDS



Marguerite Q. Warren and Ted B. Palmer Differential Intervention Award

Recognizes significant contributions to the understanding, teaching, research, or implementation of classification and differential intervention approaches.

Eligibility: DCS member whose work has advanced differential intervention practices.

Materials: Brief nomination statement, affiliation information, and curriculum vitae.



Marie Griffin Distinguished Service Award

Recognizes outstanding service to corrections and sentencing through professional organizations, universities, agencies, communities, and the Division.

Eligibility: DCS member.

Materials: Nomination letter describing service contributions and curriculum vitae.



Edward J. Latessa Practitioner Research Award

Recognizes outstanding research or implementation efforts conducted within government or community agencies that improve correctional, judicial, or community supervision policy and practice. Recognition includes up to \$500 in travel support to attend ASC.

Eligibility: DCS member employed in a government or community agency.

Materials: Nomination letter and curriculum vitae.

DCS STUDENT AWARDS



Pamela K. Lattimore and RTI International Dissertation Scholarship

Supports outstanding doctoral dissertation research focused on corrections or sentencing topics.

Eligibility: Doctoral students who have completed coursework, passed qualifying/comprehensive exams, and successfully defended their dissertation prospectus.

Materials: 1,500-word dissertation narrative, curriculum vitae, Letter of support from dissertation chair

Award: \$3,000 scholarship.



Ben Steiner Excellence in Corrections Student Paper

Recognizes the most outstanding student-authored paper in corrections.

Eligibility: Undergraduate or graduate student authors. Papers must be unpublished and not accepted for publication. Faculty coauthors are not permitted.

Materials: Paper submission (maximum 30 pages of text)

Award: Financial prize.



Dr. Kimchi Memorial Graduate Travel Award

Provides travel support for doctoral students presenting quantitative research at the ASC Annual Meeting. Preference is given to research focused on racial inequality, recidivism, social justice, probation and parole, sentencing, imprisonment, or other formal institutions of social control.

Eligibility: Doctoral students who have completed a master's degree, have an accepted ASC presentation, and plan to attend the conference. Preference for those who have completed coursework and advanced to candidacy.

Materials: Written application (max 600 words) and curriculum vitae.

Award: Two \$540 travel stipends for ASC conference travel.

Teaching Note

A Retrospective on “Ungrading in a Sentencing Classroom”: What Teaching Without Grades Taught Me

Clare Strange
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

“I like how she focused more on teaching us rather than grading us.”

– Undergraduate Sentencing (CJS 376) student

In the Fall 2025 DCS newsletter, I authored an essay describing the ungrading philosophy and the lessons I learned halfway through teaching an undergraduate sentencing course at Drexel University. I presented four main observations: 1) ungraded teaching requires a significant and ongoing time investment, 2) students may require some level of academic “deprogramming,” 3) my students held me accountable, and 4) my students held themselves accountable. Now, with the privilege of hindsight (and student feedback), I want to share some of my takeaways about the whole experience.

To put the bottom line up front, I had an overwhelmingly positive experience with ungrading, and this was reflected back to me by my students who reported a deeper understanding of the material, felt supported in their learning, and indicated that they would recommend the course to others. Beyond traditional course evaluation metrics, the most meaningful insights came from how students described their experiences in their own words. Their feedback helped me better understand what ungrading actually requires in practice, and what it makes possible. Rooted in this feedback, below I share three lessons I’m taking forward about ungrading.

Lesson 1: Revisit the Learning Contract Over and Over (and Over...)

A learning contract that guides how students are assessed in the absence of letter grades is a central feature of any ungraded course (see Fall 2025 newsletter for more details). One of my biggest takeaways is that it cannot be a one-time conversation at the beginning of the quarter. Even when students are enthusiastic about ungrading, they are unlikely to internalize this method right away because it requires a novel way

of thinking about education. As this was my first experience with ungrading, I revisited the learning contract perhaps two or three times, resulting in questions like, “What ‘counts?’” and “Can I make up points?” even eight weeks into a ten-week quarter. This confusion and uncertainty are a natural result of a lifetime of academic programming. I believe that the more frequently a class revisits the learning contract, the greater the weight it will retain for all.

In their evaluations some students expressed a desire for “a little more structure.” Rather than resistance to ungrading, I interpret this as needing clearer ongoing signals about how their work connects to learning goals. Ungrading does not eliminate structure, but redistributes it. That structure, as co-developed by the professor and students in their learning contract, must be made visible, and repeatedly. In future courses I will build in regular and more formal opportunities to revisit the learning contract via short reflections, group check-ins, or explicit moments when we pause and ask, “How is this working?” and “What does ‘progress’ look like right now?”

Lesson 2: Tie Every Activity Back to the Ungrading Philosophy

In addition to the learning contract, it is essential to continuously name and reinforce the broader ungrading philosophy in the classroom. Removing grades is not enough; educators must replace them with a clearly articulated purpose. In doing so, students are less likely to form the impression that ungrading simply means “easy” or “untracked” learning. I was most successful in this when using phrases like, “In our ungraded classroom, we [insert reminder]....”

In their evaluations students consistently pointed to the more structured activities as the most valuable parts of the course, including in-class discussions and group exercises, as well as weekly individual reflections that became an ongoing dialogue between myself and each student. One international student noted that these experiences helped them feel comfortable enough to pursue deep understanding of the material without the anxiety associated with grades.

Student feedback reinforced that they benefit most from activities and assessments that are accompanied by a narrative. For example, students want to know, “Why are we doing this?” and “How does this connect to the broader learning goals?” With enough reinforcement, they should be equipped to answer these questions for themselves by the end of the quarter. Eventually I was able to rely on the students who adapted more quickly to help answer these questions for those who were still uncomfortable with ungrading.

Lesson 3: Ungrading Allows Students to See Themselves as Learners

Perhaps the most meaningful shift was not in what my students did, but in how they described themselves in relation to the course. Across the course evaluations, students repeatedly emphasized reduced stress and connected it to having a greater investment in their own learning. One student wrote that the ungraded format made them hold themselves accountable not only to attend class, but also to stay engaged with the material as well as discussions with classmates. Another shared that it was the most engaged they had been because they were not preoccupied with losing or gaining points.

This new relationship to learning creates space for students to adopt a different identity—not as performers trying to optimize a grade, but as learners responsible to themselves and a shared intellectual community. I felt the weight of that responsibility, too, and believe that it pushed me to deliver some of my best teaching yet.

This experience has made one thing clear: ungrading is not a shortcut, and it is not inherently easier for students or educators. It requires more intentionality, more clarity, more communication, and more attention to purpose. When implemented effectively, it will likely require more time (a luxury that many of us do not share). Ultimately, I am convinced that ungrading is worth the effort and results in a richer teaching and learning experience.

Member News

Congratulations to DCS member Steven E. Barkan and coauthors Michael Rocque and Amber L. Beckley. Their textbook, *Introduction to American Corrections*, published by FlatWorld, recently received the **Most Promising New Textbook Award** from the Textbook and Academic Authors Association.

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CALL FOR ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Corrections: Policy, Practice, and Research (CPPR) promotes methodologically rigorous scholarship on criminal sentencing, institutional confinement, community corrections, treatment interventions, alternative sanctions, and reentry. The journal prioritizes empirical studies that use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method research designs to advance correctional policy, practice, and research.

Responsibilities:

- **January to December term**
- Screen manuscripts
- Select reviewers
- Collaborate with the editorial board
- Assist guest editors on special issues
- Promote and improve the CPPR

Submit To:

Dr. Jeff Bouffard
jab088@iastate.edu
by **October 1, 2026**

Include:

- Letter of Interest
- Letter of Support
- CV

Questions?

Contact Editor Dr. Ryan Labrecque,
rlabrecque@rti.edu, or
Associate Editor Dr. Jeff Bouffard,
jab088@iastate.edu.

Division Leadership

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Interested in serving on the Board?

Nominations are due August 31, 2026.
Consider nominating yourself or others for Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer,
or Executive Counselor for the 2026-2028 term.

**AMERICAN PROBATION AND
PAROLE ASSOCIATION**



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CALL FOR ARTICLES

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- Traditional review articles
- Research articles
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**Check out APPA Perspectives Website for
more information!**

From the Editor

I'm pleased to share the Spring 2026 edition of the ASC Division of Corrections and Sentencing Newsletter. It is a privilege to serve as editor of the newsletter, and I am grateful to the many members who contributed research notes, teaching reflections, announcements, and other updates for this issue. I also want to thank the members of our newsletter committee for their help soliciting submissions, reviewing content, and supporting the publication process.



Debi Koetzle
Editor

This edition showcases the breadth of work taking place across our Division. Inside, you will find research and teaching contributions from our members and information about upcoming awards and opportunities. One of my favorite aspects of the newsletter is the opportunity it provides to highlight the accomplishments, ideas, and activities of our members, and I hope you enjoy learning more about the important work being done throughout our community.

As always, I encourage you to consider contributing to a future issue. Whether you have a recent publication, innovative teaching strategy, professional accomplishment, grant award, or other news to share, we would love to feature it in an upcoming newsletter.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Wishing everyone a wonderful summer!

Call for Submissions

We are accepting corrections, courts, and sentencing focused teaching notes, student section contributions, or research notes for publication in our next issue. Ideally, submissions should be 500-1,000 words, in APA format.

Submissions will be accepted through **September 15, 2026** via
dkoetzle@jjay.cuny.edu