

APRIL 2022

With our April newsletter, we welcome spring here in the U.S. Project staff have been working hard to improve STEM learning opportunities in prisons and support access to STEM for those who are directly impacted by the carceral system.

This newsletter issue covers our work and publications since January along with upcoming events and opportunities. If you have something you'd like to share in an upcoming *STEM-OPS Quarterly Newsletter*, please email [info@stem-ops.org](mailto:info@stem-ops.org).

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## Our Latest The sySTEM Impacted Podcast Episode



### STEM and the School-to-Prison Pipeline

*The sySTEM Impacted* podcast, led by [Chris Etienne](#) (PTI) and [Terrell Blount](#) (EDC), shares stories of system-impacted people's successes and struggles related to accessing STEM education and careers. Our latest episode reflects on STEM & the school-to-prison pipeline.

"Zero-tolerance" and other harsh school disciplinary practices have led to Black students being suspended

three times more than their white counterparts. School pushout has also led to over 50% of young Black men not graduating with their high school diplomas, and over 60% coming in contact with the prison system.

This episode features [Dr. H. Richard Milner](#), author and distinguished professor at Vanderbilt University. Milner breaks down how elementary and high school teachers and staff can adjust their curricula, teaching styles, representation of teachers of color in STEM courses, and attentiveness to students of color and students as a whole, to curb the rates at which young people are entering the prison system.

[Listen to the episode.](#) (This podcast is now available to download on most major podcast apps. Please rate, review, and subscribe.)

## Our Latest STEM-OPS Blog Posts



### Trauma - What Happened to You?

In this blog post, [Basia Skudrzyk](#), policy analyst and consultant for Prison to Professionals (P2P), describes what it takes to meet the needs of trauma survivors: a great deal of sensitivity and reeducation. "Many people prefer to judge or affix a title to people versus truly understanding the environmental factors that lead to why people behave the way they do."

[Read the blog post.](#)

### How I Learned to Work WITH Students as a Co-conspirator for Educational Equity

In this blog post, Laura Fittz, an affiliated doctoral student at RRJ, describes her experience as a white female teacher unknowingly contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline, and how she ultimately started implementing Restorative Practices (RP) in her classroom, which gave her a framework for how to build community and solve problems *with* her students.



[Read the blog post.](#)

## STEM-OPS Happenings

### Operation Restoration (OR)

The [Ascendum Foundation](#) announced [Operation Restoration \(OR\)](#), in partnership with Tulane University, as [one of 22 recipients for the Ready for Pell initiative](#). This initiative will help recipients navigate upcoming changes to the Pell Grant program. OR's College in Prison Program (CPP) is the only in-person, secular, higher education opportunity available to women incarcerated in Louisiana. [The Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women \(LCIW\)](#) conducts the program in partnership with the [School of Professional Advancement \(SoPA\) at Tulane University](#).

Currently, OR and SoPA work together to offer courses required to complete a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science. OR and SoPA introduce students to a wide variety of academic fields (sciences, social sciences, and humanities) that equip them with the critical-thinking and communication skills they need to advocate for themselves inside the prison and pursue a range of employment and community engagement opportunities upon their release.

## **Prison to Professionals (P2P)**

[Dr. Stanley Andrisse](#) and [Basia Skudrzyk](#) of [Prison to Professionals \(P2P\)](#) recently met with Superintendent Chris Sarchett of [Transition Center of St. Louis \(TCSTL\)](#) and his team to discuss incorporating the P2P curriculum into the TCSTL program. The curriculum prepares returning citizens to further their education in the STEM fields. In cooperation with the Missouri Department of Corrections and under the leadership of Director of Corrections [Anne Precythe](#), the partnership's goal is to work together to give people a proven and supportive network to guide them toward achieving their academic and professional goals.



*From left: Dr. Stanley Andrisse, TCSTL Staff, Superintendent Chris Sarchett, TCSTL Staff, Basia Skudrzyk*

In February, Andrisse presented in front of two prisons in Jefferson City, Missouri (ACC & JCCC). The response to Andrisse was empowering—his message was motivational to pursue education and move past barriers to the currently incarcerated people in the room. He shared his story that he, too, experienced a hardship like the people in the room, but he chose to change the narrative.

On March 24, Andrisse and Skudrzyk, along with community partners at [St. Patrick Center](#) in St. Louis, Missouri, met with [Senator Brian Williams](#) and his team to discuss Banning the Box in Education and Employment.

In addition to working with the MO Department of Corrections, Andrisse gave an inaugural commencement speech on March 1 to 15 graduating scholars from the [Roots of Success](#) program, which focuses on green education career opportunities at St. Patrick Center.

*Dr. Stanley Andrisse  
presenting at inaugural  
Roots of Success  
graduation in front of 15  
scholars at St. Patrick  
Center in St. Louis,  
Missouri*



### **Princeton Teaching Initiative (PTI)**

The [Princeton Teaching Initiative \(PTI\)](#) is ramping up for their 10-week summer internship program for justice impacted scholars. Through mentored research and supplemental workshops, recruits are provided with opportunities to consider careers in higher education in the humanities field. Two STEM training programs will also be offered (Computational Biology & Biophysics), which expose students to computer science and principles of scientific thinking. The goal of these programs is to continue to build upon a strong mentor pipeline to provide opportunities to people who are interested in advancing their education in the STEM field without barriers to entry.

In addition to the internship programs, PTI is working to provide tablets to scholars who are learning inside the prison education system. Instructors have started filming their teaching lessons with the hope of uploading the materials onto tablets that are aimed for scholar education.

### **The Initiative for Race Research and Justice (RRJ) at Vanderbilt University**

[The Initiative for Race Research and Justice \(RRJ\)](#) will host its third Jumpstart Conference virtually on August 1, 2022. The conference will present the theme, *Racial Justice Work in the Midst of Policies and Practices Designed to Maintain Inequity*. Keynote lectures include Dr. Ghody Muhammad, Dr. D.L. Stewart, and Dr. Cheryl Matias. [Find out more](#) about the conference and its STEM- and HEP-focused breakout sessions and register.



## Upcoming Events and Opportunities

- **April 13, 2022:** Building Student Leadership Opportunities During and After Incarceration
- **April 20, 2022:** Countdown to Pell Reinstatement: Getting Ready for Pell Reinstatement in 2023
- **April 27, 2022:** Manufacturing a Future Post-Release: Two Paths to High-Skill Manufacturing Jobs
- **May 3, 2022:** Prison and the Academy: Lessons from Trauma-Informed Classrooms
- **August 1, 2022:** RRJ 3rd Annual Jumpstart Conference
- **September 8–10, 2022:** Rise Up Conference (save the date)
- **November 11–14, 2022:** National Conference on Higher Education in Prison
- **Monthly Through August:** Womxn's P2P Cohort 2022

View these opportunities at any time at <https://stem-ops.org/events/>

## New Resources

**BOOK:** *Profit and Punishment: How America Criminalizes the Poor in the Name of Justice* by Tony Messenger

In *Profit and Punishment*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Messenger exposes the tragedy of modern-day debtors' prisons, and how they destroy the lives of poor Americans swept up in a system designed to penalize the most impoverished.

**ARTICLE:** "The Prison to Ph.D. Pipeline: Formerly Incarcerated Howard Medical Researcher Brings Graduate Education to the Recently Released," by Sholnn Z. Freeman  
[This article](#) describes an innovative program led by directly impacted Dr. Stanley Andrisse and several of his College of Medicine colleagues that gives other formerly incarcerated people pathways to careers in STEM through research internships on Howard University's campus

**VIDEO:** *From Prison to Careers in Science*, by NOVA PBS Official

In [this video](#), Drs. Stanley Andrisse, Noel Vest, and Syrita Steib share their journeys to create a pipeline providing access and opportunity to system impacted individuals through education, hope, and opportunity. Listen to each authentic experience which is changing the narrative in the STEM field.

## STEM-OPS Website



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