



T-POCC Manual

Edited Excerpt from the 2017 Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program Draft Think Tank Manual

The Inside-Out (I-O) Prison Exchange Program (<http://www.insideoutcenter.org>) was founded in 1997 by Lori Pompa of Temple University and is based on the simple hypothesis that incarcerated men and women and college students might mutually benefit from studying crime, justice, and related social issues together as peers. The original idea for this exchange among college students and people inside prison came from a man named Paul serving life in a Pennsylvania prison. The first class conducted in a state prison was in Pennsylvania in 2002. The Inside-Out Program has grown significantly over the years, building from one I-O class into 1000+ classes in 46 states and in 11 different countries, with over 35,000 students participating in this unique and important learning opportunity. It was that first class at Graterford state prison when the group of both inside and outside students decided to stay together and continue meeting after the semester was over. The initial plan for the group was to create projects centered on public education around prison reform. Eventually, this group developed into the very first Think Tank. Since 2002, Inside-Out has grown nationally and now internationally with 24+ established Think Tanks, including two abroad. As we continue to grow with more and more instructors wanting to start Think Tanks, we have set out to offer some best practices for Think Tanks.

Purpose of Inside-Out Think Tanks

Inside-Out as a program has developed to become more aware of the community building aspect rather than only training instructors to teach the Inside-Out model. We have, over the years, become a program where some of the focus is using the educational process to bring people together to change society. Sharing a common experience and uniting around the power of education that helps to inspire and empower people to act. We have found that Think Tanks are one of the many opportunities to extend our reach into the broader community, whether it happens in prison or on the outside. These shared experiences allow Inside-Out Think Tank participants to regularly meet, create ideas for change and foster leadership development, skill building, community education (inside and beyond) and much, much more. The Graterford Think Tank has served as a model for instructor trainings where both inside and outside member have taken the lead in some aspects of facilitating parts of the trainings. This alone has developed leadership skills that are transferable to future aspirations and other activities.

Additionally, Think Tanks serve to build community. Some Think Tanks conduct community workshops and other such events that engage people from the community with their fellow men and women at their institution or facility. Think Tanks also serve to provide outlets for alumni to stay engaged and active in Inside-Out Activities. As a result, Think Tanks also offer the capacity to

share resources and the experiences gained from being engaged in activities that cultivate expertise in several community building activities.

History of the Graterford Think Tank

The first Inside-Out class at Graterford had such a powerful impact on its participants that the thirty participants could not let the experience become just a memory. There was an enormous level of energy at the end and we felt we needed to keep the energy alive. We were full of enthusiasm and ideas. Feeling the impact of the recently completed class, we felt compelled to figure out a way to keep meeting to discuss criminal justice issues that affected each of us in a deeply personal way. Some members had offended and some were victims, but all were deeply committed to helping raise awareness about the flaws within the criminal justice system. We believed that we could propose workable remedies to some of these glaring systemic defects. We were idealistic, but we had to keep the passion going, though we had no sense of where the weekly meetings would lead. We wanted to see if we could bring life to some of our brainstorming and ideas. The challenge was to put these academic theories into practice. It was out of this experience that ultimately led to where we are today, 24 Think Tanks Internationally (<http://www.insideoutcenter.org/think-tanks.html>).

The Pantheon of Critical Criminologists (T-POCC) at Southeastern Correctional Complex (SCC) in Lancaster, Ohio

History of OSU Inside-Out at SCC

Angela Bryant, OSU Newark, has offered Inside-Out courses every fall since 2009 with approximately even numbers of university (outside) and incarcerated (inside) students at a male prison that houses minimum/medium-security men, SCC. Each Inside-Out class culminates with a group project that is developed and designed by students using empirical research to guide possible solutions for the criminal justice system. Two Inside-Out cohorts focused their final group projects on providing the correctional system with evidence-based research on how the state can meet the goal of reducing the prison population. One element of the second cohort's report focused on enhancing communication to all people in prison about programs available and ensuring more attention is given to determining what programs actually help them attain knowledge and skills for successful reentry to their communities. At the conclusion of this course, two outside and four inside students decided they wanted to conduct a survey themselves to determine which programs people in prison find beneficial beyond reasons related to judicial release (e.g., being able to demonstrate to the court that they have completed different rehabilitation programs). They conducted the literature review and designed a survey of six questions. Two of the inside students administered 74 anonymous surveys to men currently incarcerated at the prison who have completed one or more of the programs. Two additional inside and two outside students analyzed the data and drafted the findings

with feedback from all project participants. The project members presented their findings with administrators at the prison, which came at a crucial time of programmatic decision-making, as the prison was transitioning to house a “reintegration dorm.”

At the conclusion of the 2011 Inside-Out course, four students asked to co-author an article about the experience. Angela coordinated monthly meetings at the prison for them to work together on the paper until the men were released, at which time we held the last few meetings on campus. The paper was completely driven by the students in terms of the framing of the topic, literature review, analyses, and writing. The article was accepted in October 2012 for publication in an undergraduate journal focused on community-based learning. At the same time, two inside students sought to write a paper about the role of higher education in their individual process of transformation in prison. Angela co-authored this paper with the men and it was published in 2014 in the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*.

The 2012 Inside-Out cohort’s group project predominantly focused on recommendations for the implementation of evidence-based practices for reentry programs geared specifically at the prison site reintegration dorm as well as more generally across the state. One key recommendation was to develop a partnership between the prison and the university to enable college students to co-facilitate some of the needed reintegration dorm programs in order to address the issue of staff shortages and budget cuts at the prison. The prison site was very receptive to the plan and with the support of an OSU-Newark service-learning course development grant, we implemented this pilot initiative Spring 2013. OSU students co-facilitated some of the programs people in prison are required to take in the designated reintegration dorm at the prison three hours per week. The students took a four-hour volunteer training at SCI, observed a program facilitated by one of the case managers to see the environment and functionality, attended additional training that Angela provided, developed research-based curriculum, participated in weekly discussion board forums, and submitted weekly reflection assignments. This program benefited all those involved. Students were getting direct experience working across multiple levels (people in prison, correctional officers, staff and administration) within the correctional environment for career exploration and obtaining the pedagogical benefits of bridging empirical research with practice. Incarcerated participants were able to enroll in courses required to obtain employability certification to prepare for their upcoming release and the prison gained access to programs for 80-100 people in prison that they could not provide due to limited resources. Half of the students who participated in Spring 2013 continued as interns at the prison for Summer 2013, and Angela recommended two new Inside-Out student alumni each semester to work as interns at SCI, until 2015. The 2014 Inside-Out class focused their group project on parole policies and practices for “old law” offenders and held the first didactic workshop with state officials in December 2014 to discuss the

changes needed in the state of Ohio. Further, previous Inside-Out students (both previously incarcerated and free students) have presented at local and national conferences and have been invited guest lecturers at universities across the state of Ohio to discuss their experiences in prison, Inside-Out, and re-entry. Many former inside students have asked for assistance in navigating entrance to college upon their release and some former students are attending universities in their communities.

From 2010-2017, Angela served as a member of the International Inside-Out Prison Exchange Steering and Research Committees. Inside-Out is actively engaged in a state-by-state expansion plan which will allow its model to serve students in all 50 states and abroad. The replication project is stewarded by a number of advisors; chief among them are the members of Inside-Out's National Steering Committee and National Research Committee (for more information see: <http://www.insideoutcenter.org/advisory-boards.html>) In addition to her professional service to the International Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, Angela is active in developing Inside-Out programs for other prisons in Ohio in her role as the Ohio statewide coordinator since 2010 for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC). She has also been working with faculty in multiple departments at OSU to get trained and begin offering Inside-Out courses and have been invited to speak at other Universities in Ohio in order to expand offerings across the state. As of 2019, we have 16 instructors from 10 different universities offering Inside-Out courses in 11 different Ohio state prisons. We also have four think tanks in Ohio.

History of The Pantheon of Critical Criminologists (T-POCC)

Since 2014, Inside-Out classes at SCI have focused their group projects on parole policies and practices of the Ohio Parole Board and held didactic workshops with state officials to discuss the changes needed. It was at the 2017 didactic workshop that ODRC and Parole Board representatives suggested we continue our work and conduct a parole research project. Hence, our think tank of inside-out alumni was born in January 2018. We met weekly on Tuesday nights at SCC from 5:30-8:15pm from January until May 2018 and then moved to a bi-monthly schedule (1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month). We are utilizing Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods to partner with Inside-Out alumni as researchers in order to conduct innovative research that can have a direct impact on parole in Ohio. By engaging Inside-Out alumni as informed researchers, we incorporate evidence-based action as a necessary component for implementing short- and long-term solutions to community-defined social problems in prisons and upon release from prison. PAR aligns practice with principle and can influence the necessary practices to reduce incarceration and still keep communities safe. The think tank discussed the goals of the PAR parole project, extensively reviewed the PAR literature, reviewed the CITI training for human subjects research along with reviewing studies conducted in prisons and on parole. The street PAR project

was approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), but the ODRC IRB rejected the research proposal.

T-POCC Principles:

- 1) Incarcerated people have invaluable insight into the challenges and solutions of incarceration and reentry
- 2) Justice-involved people will play a central role in any policy's success
- 3) Everyone inside and outside of prison is responsible for the justice and safety of our communities

Beyond the PAR parole project, we have the following two long-term goals and objectives:

- 1) Bring awareness to our communities about challenges and successes in prisons by elevating the voices of those who are incarcerated, those who work in prisons, and those who volunteer in prisons.
- 2) Provide solutions to reentry.

We have three different subcommittees to accomplish our goals and an executive committee; comprised of the instructor liaison, two founding inside think tank members, and two founding outside think tank members. The executive committee makes all significant decisions that cannot be achieved by the larger membership through consensus based decision-making processes, such as membership criteria and term limits, partnership opportunities and projects, and publication protocols. The executive committee also coordinates all significant T-POCC events at the prison.

I. The Street PAR Parole Project Committee:

Goals:

- 1) Advocate for a transparent system of parole that includes an appeal process and an external review committee who oversees all Ohio Parole Board practices and decisions.
- 2) Propose, implement, and evaluate an "inmate facilitated" parole-training program at SCI for men who see the Ohio Parole Board for release.
- 3) Partner with the Ohio Justice & Policy Center for Parole Reform on their "Beyond Guilt" project (<https://beyondguilt.org/>)

II. Communications Committee:

Goals:

- 1) Break down negative stereotypes amongst the general public regarding prisons and incarcerated people. Create information sharing between the public, corrections system, and the people affected by it.
- 2) Create platforms in which we can share information.
- 3) Create an OSU student organization that advocates for prison reform (Students for Justice Transformation).
- 4) Create in-person meetings with prison staff that effectively communicate solutions to problems in the prison.

III. Reentry Committee:

Goals:

- 1) Build higher education offerings in prison and pathways to college in the community.

- 2) Raise awareness of the benefits of hiring and reintegrating formerly incarcerated people into the community
- 3) Implement the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)
- 4) Implement and evaluate the Federal Reentry Simulation
(<https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdal/programs/ex-offender-re-entry-initiative>)
- 5) Recruit volunteers to come teach reentry programs in the prison

T-POCC Membership Policy

Applicants must have completed at least one Inside-Out Prison Exchange class and submit the following to apply for T-POCC membership: name, year and location of the Inside-Out class successfully completed, and a one-page statement that addresses the reason(s) for wanting to join T-POCC, strengths and weaknesses in relation to academic work, ability to commit to and devote time to the think tank, and knowledge of the criminal justice system. The applicant will need to provide one recommendation from an Inside-Out instructor.

T-POCC will meet and provide applicants with:

The amount of time they should expect to dedicate to T-POCC

How to receive credit for participation (outside members)

Ability to travel to the prison (outside members)

Membership retention criteria:

Must notify instructor liaison 24 hours in advance if cannot attend and provide reason why

Must actively participate both in meetings and the work of T-POCC

After three unexcused absences from T-POCC, must meet with instructor liaison to determine whether membership shall continue