

PROGRAM EVALUABILITY STUDY OF CULINARY ARTS PROGRAMS IN THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION



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ABSTRACT

There is sufficient evidence to support the claim that the provision of quality vocational and education training is cost beneficial to correctional systems. In testing this claim within the State of Connecticut Department of Correction (CTDOC), an evaluability study was conducted to determine if a subsequent impact analysis was feasible. The purpose of this study is to provide a baseline of the quality of the culinary arts programming and to identify recommendations that should be made, so that the programs demonstrate a level of consistency and adequacy for an impact analysis to result in a meaningful interpretation. At this point, an impact analysis is not recommended until the following steps are taken by the CTDOC: (a) make a commitment to its vision by providing adequate culinary arts resources (i.e., physical space, equipment, and programming) in all level-3 security institutions and lower; (b) provide all culinary educators with P-Cards to make specialized food item purchases; (c) create a plan to support all culinary arts programs to provide internship experiences for students; (d) develop a least-restrictive schedule that creates the least number of scheduling conflicts for student inmates; (e) partner with the State Department of Labor to coordinate services to be able to track the employment rates of ex-offenders; (f) collaborate with local civic agencies to develop local volunteers to assist all vocational and education completers with direct support in finding and maintaining employment related to their field of interest; (g) develop a consistent protocol for tracking accurate waitlist members (weekly, monthly, etc.).

INTRODUCTION

During FY 2015 a memorandum of agreement was signed between the Connecticut Department of Correction (CTDOC) and Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). Whereas the State of Connecticut has committed to the Results First Initiative, CTDOC agreed to contract the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy to conduct a Program Evaluability Study and subsequent Impact Analysis of the vocational education programming within the CTDOC.

Evaluability Study

The purpose of an evaluability study is to determine whether a program is ‘evaluable.’ This type of study emerged in the 1970’s and 1980’s to prevent researchers from drawing premature conclusions of governmental programs while ignoring obvious methodological limitations or gaps in the viability of the program being studied. Thus, evaluability studies emerged to help determine whether or not a program is viable and is implemented with an adequate degree of fidelity. Otherwise, it is difficult to parse out whether poor outcomes are directly attributed to a program’s ineffectiveness or the fact that it isn’t implemented with integrity.¹

Review of the Literature

Vocational education participation in prison is associated with lower recidivism upon release (Callan & Gardner, 2005; Harer, 1995; Hull et al., 2000; Wilson, Gallager, & MacKenzie, 2000). Although one can infer that there are substantive differences between inmates who choose to participate and complete vocational education and those who do not, evidence suggests that differences in recidivism rates exist even after accounting for differences in personal characteristics of the inmates.

In one of the most comprehensive evaluations of vocational education programs in correctional institutions, Callan and Gardner (2005) found a 24 to 28% drop in recidivism for inmates who had any involvement in vocational and education programs, compared to those who had no involvement in these education programs. These results are noteworthy because the authors in the study controlled for differences in personal background characteristics.

In a Virginia study of the records of 3,000 inmates from the 1970’s to the 1990’s, results suggest that vocational completers are 21% likely to be re-incarcerated, compared to vocational non-completers (37% likely), and those with no educational involvement during incarceration (49% likely). In a sample of 347 people on parole, 77% of those who completed educational programming were employed for at least 90 days, compared to 61% non-completers, and 54% who received no educational programming while incarcerated (Hull et al., 2000). Although the authors did not account for differences in personal characteristics of the inmates, these results further support the premise that participation in vocational education may lead to greater employability of ex-offenders.

There is a logical relationship between an inmate’s level of education and his / her likelihood to recidivate, i.e., the more years of schooling an inmate has before being incarcerated the less likelihood that he will recidivate. This logic may also be applied for inmates who complete educational programs while incarcerated - each education program successfully completed within a six-month prison term is associated with lower recidivism (Harer, 1995). Thus there is a need to explore the degree of access that inmates have to quality vocational education programs because if large

¹Van Voorhis, P. & Brown, K. (n.d.). Evaluability Assessment: A Tool for Program Development. Retrieved Sept 1, 2015, from:

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/014292.pdf>

numbers of inmates are released without being provided access to quality vocational or education programs, states may be doing a disservice to the premise of ‘corrections.’

Corrections and Supports

Recognizing that ex-offenders’ degree of success is directly tied to the supports (or lack thereof) that they receive while incarcerated and during reentry, correctional systems must learn to provide adaptive inmate supports within the constraints of a secure environment - some inmates need more supports than others if they are to achieve successful reentry. In early research on this issue, Khatibi and Grande (1993) advocated for the following: (a) Any correctional system should be equipped with a minimum of twenty certified vocational training programs; (b) inmates must be able to convert their training into productive behavior in the community, otherwise vocational education is of little value; and (c) transition advisors (even volunteers) must be assigned to inmates needing assistance with job placement, accessing local services, and developing a civic responsibility. More recent research (Waintrup & Unruh, 2008), affirms that having a quality transition specialist is an essential element of helping inmates experience successful reentry.

In Alabama, 9 out of 10 inmates with 90 days or less from release indicated that they did not have an available pathway to long-term employment (Curtis et al., 2013). Correctional systems, therefore, must recognize internship opportunities as essential aspects of vocational education programs (Eichmann, 2015; Hertzman, 2008; 2012). At the Sussex Community Corrections Center in Delaware, inmates who successfully complete a 14-week vocational education program are given the last two weeks to work off-site and be paid by a local business. According to an administrator of the program, 92% of program completers are employed upon reentry (Eichmann, 2015).

Including Inmate Perspectives

In an effort to ensure that the findings and recommendations of this report are likely to benefit the population being served, we made a point to meaningfully include inmates in the evaluation of the culinary arts program. Involving inmates in the research and evaluation process is recommended by Costelloe (2007), who argues that researchers work with a subgroup of prison students as ‘critical friends.’ Thus, we included inmate feedback at two separate stages in this research project.

Limitations of the Literature

Although research on vocational education within the field of corrections has grown in recent years, we have not identified many recently published peer-reviewed studies that isolate the effectiveness of culinary arts programming for inmate populations. Further, most of the research that has been published on the effects of vocational education does not account for differences in student inmate backgrounds (such as level of education) nor do they compare their results to a sufficient control group (i.e., program completers, partial-completers, waitlisters, etc.). We have, however, made efforts to correct for both of these limitations in this current study.

Culinary Arts within the CTDOC

Education within the Connecticut Department of Correction (CTDOC) is provided through Unified School District #1 (USD #1). The mission of USD #1 “is to provide quality education programs for incarcerated individuals so that they can make a successful transition to society.... Academic and vocational training is provided to inmates through a variety of programs flexible enough to accommodate a variety of learning styles” (CT Department of Corrections, 2014, p.1). According to the CTDOC (p.1), “The potential for employment upon release is further enhanced through work skill

readiness programs and job fairs held at many of the Department's facilities." USD #1 operates under the vision that it "will be recognized for its forward thinking, its connections to the community and for the success of its students" (CTDOC, 2012).

More than 75% of the inmate population does not hold a high school diploma upon admission (CTDOC, 2014). Approximately 40% of all inmates in Connecticut attend some form of education programming each year, and the average student inmate functions between a 5th and 6th grade reading level.

According to the CTDOC Annual Report (2011-2012), the culinary arts program "stresses safety and sanitation as well as tool and equipment usage. Through practice and discussion, students are taught skills in basic cooking methods, culinary techniques, weights, measures and recipe conversions. Participants earn a ServSafe® Certificate after passing a test administered by the National Restaurant Association. This program is an apprenticeship approved through the CT State Department of Labor." In 2011-2012, the CTDOC served 7,406 unduplicated student inmates annually, 392 of which completed a certificate program in vocational education.

Reentry Classes within the CTDOC

According to the CTDOC Annual Report (2011-2012), "students who are expected to be released within 6 months are encouraged to attend a 21-day curriculum, which focuses on reentry into the community. This curriculum prepares the student to return to the community and assists the student in obtaining identification, birth certificates, state identification cards, and social security cards, as well as, how to prepare for employment and housing. An additional component on reuniting inmates with family members and a component on the "Shaken-Baby Syndrome" are also included."

Purpose of this Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the evaluability of the Culinary Arts Programs within the Connecticut Department of Correction (CTDOC). We attempt to address the following research questions (RQs):

RQ#1: To what extent does the culinary arts program within the CTDOC demonstrate adequate evaluability?

RQ#2: Considering the perspectives of culinary arts educators, student inmates, and of the literature, how should culinary arts function logically?

RQ#3: Is there accurate data to compare the recidivism rates of partial completers, non-completers (wait-listed), and those who did not apply to the culinary arts program? recently enacted model in Colorado.

METHODS

Central Connecticut State University Professors Michele Dischino, Department of Technology and Engineering Education, and Jacob Werblow, Department of Educational Leadership, the authors of this report, were contracted by the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) in April of 2015. After consulting with DOC staff members Dr. Patrick Hynes and Ms. Caryn McCarthy, Dr.'s Dischino and Werblow developed the following procedures: (a) write an annotated literature review; (b) develop Human Subjects Proposal; (c) consult with culinary arts educators on logic model; (d) hold focus groups for student inmates at two facilities; (e) present results of focus groups to culinary arts educators; (f) analyze 5-year recidivism rates for all culinary programs. Below is a timeline of the major activities completed for this is project:

Activity	Description	Dates completed
Annotated Literature Review	As requested in the contract, a review of the literature was conducted to provide the evaluation team a broad scope of the recent literature related to this field.	April 9, 2015
Human Studies Council (HSC) Approval	After reviewing the proposal and requesting specific changes to the evaluation protocol, the HSC approved this project.	May 1, 2015
Focus Group: Culinary Educators	Dr. Werblow led discussion with culinary arts educators.	May 4, 2015
Focus Groups: Student Inmates	Focus groups to gather student inmate perspectives on Culinary Arts, feedback summarized and incorporated into the logic model	July 17, 2015 (Manson-Cheshire) July 23, 2015 (York-Niantic)
Follow-Up Focus Group: Educators	Dr.'s Dischino and Werblow met with the Culinary Educators to solicit feedback on the logic model	August 12, 2015
Logic Model Finalized Initial Culinary Arts Evaluation	Logic model finalized after receiving feedback from culinary educators.	October 12, 2015
Report Completed	At this point, there appear to be several inconsistencies in the quality of the culinary arts program between institutions, so we plan to release an initial report with recommendations for the DOC to address before we recommend moving forward with an impact study / cost-benefit analysis.	October 16, 2015

Focus Group: Culinary Educators

On May 4th, 2015, Dr. Werblow led a focus group with all of the current educators (n = 5) of the culinary arts program within the CTDOC. Ms. McCarthy also attended the focus group. Drawing from the literature concerning vocational education effectiveness within the field of corrections and

suggestions from informal interviews with Ms. McCarthy and Dr. Hynes, Dr.'s Dischino and Werblow developed five, open-ended questions. The focus group for the culinary educators was held at the Connecticut DOC main building in Wethersfield, and ran for approximately 90 minutes. Interviews were not tape-recorded, but the main points were summarized by Dr. Werblow and then repeated back to the participants. One week after the focus group, the summary was transcribed and shared with the participants to check for accuracy. Results of this discussion were the primary content used to shape the first draft of the logic model.

Focus Groups: Student Inmates

Dr.'s Dischino and Werblow led focus groups with 11 student inmates at the Manson Youth Institution on July 17th, 2015, and a focus group for 9 student inmates at the York Correctional Institution the following week. At Manson and York, Dr.'s Dischino and Werblow were accompanied by Ms. McCarthy. In both contexts, all participants were current culinary arts students within their respective facilities and gave written consent to participate in the study. All student inmates who signed the written consent were selected to participate. Both focus groups were held within the culinary arts classroom at each respective institution. Participants answered five open-ended questions about: (a) the quality of their learning experience; (b) how long they had been in the program; (c) why they chose to participate in the program; (d) what they have learned; and (e) how the program could be improved. Due to security restrictions, the discussion was not tape-recorded, rather, Dr.'s Dischino and Werblow took notes of student responses and cross-checked their records for accuracy the following day. Student inmate perspectives were then considered and inserted into the logic model when applicable.

Follow-Up Focus Group: Culinary Educators

After one of the Culinary Arts faculty retired, Dr.'s Dischino and Werblow held a follow-up focus group with the four remaining culinary arts educators to seek additional feedback on the revised logic model proposed. Ms. McCarthy again joined the focus group, which was held at the Connecticut DOC office in Wethersfield. The discussion lasted for approximately 90 minutes.

Variables and Analyses

To compare baseline data of the outcomes of the culinary arts program, recidivism rates are presented across the following inmate categorizations: (a) culinary arts completers, (b) non-completers, (c) waitlisted inmates, and (d) inmates who did not apply. To further isolate the effects of participation in the culinary arts program, we included the following predictors into the model: (a) 21-day reentry participation; (b) counseling, or (c) no transitional services, as well as (d) GED / high school completion. All predictors were treated as binary variables. Three year recidivism rate was the only dependent variable included in the study because we were not able to acquire inmate level health data and employment data.

RESULTS

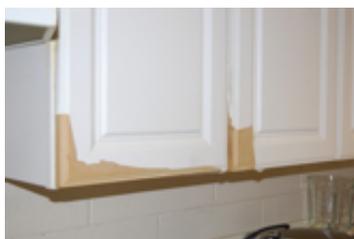
Program Resources

The first, and perhaps most important finding, is that the Connecticut Department of Correction does not currently offer culinary arts programming in all of its level III and lower security institutions. Three medium security correctional institutions and lower - Brooklyn, Enfield, and Willard-Cybulski - do not currently offer any culinary arts programming. In addition, of the five (5) programs that are functional, three (3) currently do not have adequate space or adequate equipment for the educators to be able to teach the required curriculum. This means that over 1,100 student inmates incarcerated in these three facilities annually do not have access to culinary arts programming, at least 100 of which are under 22 years old.²

York Correctional Institute. Located in Niantic, the York Correctional Institute is a level 2-5 security facility and is the state's only institution for female offenders. The culinary arts program at the York offers a complete kitchen and is housed in a large classroom (approximately 2,000 square feet), with a sufficient area for academic learning (tables and chairs) as well as a kitchen area with steel tables, industrial refrigerators, oven, stoves, mixers, etc. From observation, the space is extremely clean and well kept. See images below:



John R. Manson Youth Institute. The Manson Youth Institute is a level 4 high-security facility and holds inmates primarily between 14-21 years old. The first impression of visiting the culinary arts classroom at the Manson Youth Institute is that the size of the room is clearly not sufficient. The entire classroom area (approximately 700 square feet) is used for lecture, food production, computer use, etc.). The lack of sufficient physical space also correlates with a lack of sufficient equipment: The room holds two small household freezers, which are inadequate, and two household stoves, which are both in need of repair. There is not an industrial oven, nor food processor. From observation, the room is clean, but the cabinets are also in general disrepair as many doors are unhinged, missing handles, or are badly damaged. See images below:



²Numbers taken from 2011-2012 Annual Report of USD#1, the most recent report available.

Osborn Correctional Institute. The Osborn Correctional Institute is a medium security prison located in Enfield and is one of the largest correctional institutions in Connecticut. The culinary arts classroom at Osborn is large (approximately 2,000 square feet), but it does not have adequate resources and equipment because it is run out of a classroom space, not a proper culinary kitchen. For example, students only have access to one residential stove and 12 electric cooktop burners, which simply cannot adequately prepare them for culinary arts careers that deal with food preparation and / or cooking in an industrial kitchen. See images below:



Robinson Correctional Institution. The Robinson Correctional Institution is a level-3 medium security prison also located in Enfield. The Culinary Arts Program at this institution has adequate classroom space (approximately 1,000 square feet) and is considered a full kitchen. The classroom offers industrial mixers, freezers, refrigerators, stoves, cooktops, etc. Pictures are available below:



Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Center. Located in Uncasville, the Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Center is a level 3/4 security institution and serves both pre-trial and sentenced offenders. The culinary arts classroom is in the Radgowski building. The physical space is adequate, but the equipment is not. A request for new equipment has been submitted and is pending at the time of publication of this report. Because of staff turnover (the former educator recently retired), we do not have more data on the resources of the program at this time.

Garner Correctional Institution. Located in Newtown, Garner's culinary arts program was run by Chef Fazo, who retired July 1, 2015 and the USD#1 is in the process of hiring his replacement at the time of publication of this report. The facilities at Garner are adequate, the space is large, and the equipment reportedly in good working condition. At the time of this report, there is a hiring freeze on state employees so the position is not likely to be filled this fiscal year.

Focus Group I: Culinary Educators

Five culinary arts educators and Caryn McCarthy met with Dr. Werblow to discuss the strengths and areas of improvement of the program. Highlights of the discussion include the following benefits: (a) experienced teachers committed to student inmate success; (b) hands-on skills that allow student inmates to learn problem solving, cooperation, healthy cooking, ServSafe® credential, etc.; (c) some opportunities for student inmates to be provided with an authentic learning experience to cook for real audiences. The following limitations were discussed: (a) inequitable space and resources; (b) lack of ability to teach the full curriculum because of the inability to have P-cards and a lack of time (2.5 hours each class vs. full-day classes); and (c) lack of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Focus Group at Manson: Student Inmates

Eleven student inmates participated in a focus group at Manson Youth Correctional Facility, see Appendix A for full details. Highlights of the discussion include the following benefits: (a) teacher is very hands-on, treats us like (real) people; (b) opportunity to create and serve the menu for graduation; (c) gives us work skills, future planning; (d) allows us to ‘feel like we are part of something.’ The following limitations were discussed: (a) expand the kitchen classroom and equipment so that we can cook more varieties of foods (less repetition), (b) give us more opportunities to prepare foods for real functions, real people; (c) 2.5 hour class too short, we can’t complete many recipes properly, move to full day; (d) reduce interruptions, ‘lock-downs’ / counts; (e) give us more support in finding careers in culinary arts – job corps, etc.; (f) if we successfully complete the program, make our parole easier (acknowledge us for working hard and bettering ourselves).

Logic Model

Using the framework provided by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance³, we constructed a logic model based off of feedback received from the focus groups with culinary educators and student inmates at York and Manson Youth Institutions.

Logic Model: Culinary Arts Program in the Connecticut Department of Corrections

Problem Statement: Hundreds of inmates in Connecticut’s Department of Corrections sign-up for the culinary arts program each year, but the majority are not given the opportunity to enroll or complete the program. Data suggests that, not due to the fault of the program staff, the fidelity of the program implementation is not sufficient to render an impact analysis.

Resources	Strategies & activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Impacts
What resources are or could be available?	What will the activities, events, and such be?	What are the initial products of these activities?	What changes are expected in the short term?	What changes do you want to occur after the initial outcomes?	What are the anticipated changes over the long haul?
Quality culinary arts programming is made available to all inmates, who have applied and meet ‘best fit’ criteria⁴, at level 3 and lower institutions.	Hold strategic planning session within CTDOC vocational education programs to create uniform procedure for student inmate selection and access at Level 3 and lower institutions.	‘Best-fit’ inmate selection criteria is developed. Vocational education is offered at all level 3 and lower institutions.	More inmates nearing the end of sentence are given access to participate in vocational education programs.	Upon reentry, vocational education completers are less likely to recidivate and are more likely to gain and maintain employment.	Ex-offenders are more likely to be productive members of society after reentry if they learn how to grow their own food and prepare healthy meals.

³ Shakman, K., & Rodriguez, S. M. (2015). *Logic models for program design, implementation, and evaluation: Workshop toolkit* (REL 2015–057). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

⁴‘Best Fit’ criteria is any inmate who has less than one year left on his/her sentence, priority given to transfers, interests, etc.) vs. the (current) first-come first-serve enrollment.

Resources	Strategies & activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Impacts
What resources are or could be available?	What will the activities, events, and such be?	What are the initial products of these activities?	What changes are expected in the short term?	What changes do you want to occur after the initial outcomes?	What are the anticipated changes over the long haul?
All culinary arts programs are provided with equitable and adequate resources (i.e., full kitchens, least restrictive scheduling⁵, etc.).	School administrators create work plan to ensure that all culinary arts programs have access to full kitchens and that education courses do not conflict with mandated group counseling sessions.	Culinary educators have access to full kitchens and are able to complete the program curriculum.	All culinary arts completers are given the opportunity to complete the entire program.	Culinary arts completers are more likely to grow their own food and incorporate more whole foods into their diets.	Ex-offenders are more likely to gain and maintain employment in culinary arts and / or cook healthier meals for their families.
Culinary arts educators are all ServSafe® certified educators.	Each year, culinary arts educators will be made available to ServSafe® certify all DOC kitchen staff.	Facility kitchens use, maintain, and enhance safety and sanitation.	Increase the use, maintenance, and enhancement of safety and sanitary conditions in which meals are prepared.	Increase kitchen staff's knowledge of sanitary and personal hygiene.	Decrease in medical costs as fewer inmates are sick due to food borne illnesses.
Healthy food as a reward system / entrepreneurial opportunity	Culinary arts programs prepare and serve healthy meals as: (a) commissary café as rewards system and (b) café for the public.	Inmates are given access to healthier foods. Culinary arts students are given opportunities for on-the-job training.	Increase in positive behaviors among inmates and increase in job readiness skills for culinary arts students.	Increase in inmates released early on 'good behavior' and increase in employability among culinary arts students.	More positive interactions between inmates, public, and DOC staff, etc.

⁵ Least restrictive scheduling refers to offering culinary arts and other vocational education programs at a time that does not conflict with inmates' required group sessions, counseling, etc. In addition, the current half-day programming limits the range of meals the inmates can learn to prepare; a schedule of full-day sessions on alternating days should be piloted instead.

Resources	Strategies & activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Impacts
What resources are or could be available?	What will the activities, events, and such be?	What are the initial products of these activities?	What changes are expected in the short term?	What changes do you want to occur after the initial outcomes?	What are the anticipated changes over the long haul?
Inmates and supporting local farms / local foods.	Prison Garden Partnerships – Culinary arts programs partner with local farms / on-site gardens.	Student inmates have more opportunities to make healthy food choices	Student inmates gain more experience growing and eating fresh fruits and vegetables.	Culinary arts completers are more likely to grow their own food and incorporate more whole foods into their diets.	More community gardens in urban areas as more ex-offenders have gardening and food service skills to offer their communities.
Provide P-cards to all culinary arts educators.	P-cards will allow culinary arts educators to make small order purchases of food items.	Culinary arts educators teach the complete curriculum.	Student inmates are given the opportunity to learn the complete curriculum.	Student inmates are better prepared for assorted jobs as it relates to food service.	Student inmates are more likely to find employment in culinary arts related careers, (design, production, growing, cooking, catering, fast-food, etc.).
21-day reentry program.	All student inmate completers are given access.	More student inmates complete the 21-day reentry program.	Student inmates have greater success upon reentry.	Student inmates are less likely to recidivate.	Student inmates are more likely to find employment and lead productive lives.
Halfway houses and employment Work-release programs are expanded at the state-level (e.g., CT used to give \$2,500 to local businesses for each ex-felon hired).	Restarting Work Pilot Program - Create a pilot program where halfway house beds are tied to specific jobs in the community (either paid internships or temp-to-permanent work).	Culinary arts students are given opportunities for on-the-job training.	Ex-offenders maintain greater employment in fields / trades in which they are skilled.	Halfway houses function as prison-to-work networks in local communities.	Recidivism rates decrease across the state of Connecticut.

Resources	Strategies & activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Impacts
What resources are or could be available?	What will the activities, events, and such be?	What are the initial products of these activities?	What changes are expected in the short term?	What changes do you want to occur after the initial outcomes?	What are the anticipated changes over the long haul?
CT Office of Labor employment data.	MOU between CTDOC and Office of Labor to track employment data upon reentry.	Outcomes other than recidivism (e.g., employment status, income, etc.) are used to drive decision-making.	CTDOC is better able to model 'results first' protocol on important outcomes such as employment status, occupation, income, etc.	CTDOC is better able to implement data-based decision making.	Recidivism rates decrease across the state of Connecticut.

Assumptions: Ensuring that all interested inmates nearing the end of their sentence are given the opportunity to complete high-quality vocational education, such as culinary arts, and then supported in finding paid work will result in limitless benefits. Those that can be quantified are: increases in overall health and wellbeing, increases in finding and maintaining employment, and decreases in recidivism. Ensuring that vocational education completers have access to both the 21-day reentry programming, followed by supportive housing (including paid work) is the minimum that Connecticut can provide if we intend ex-offenders to have and maintain successful reintegration into society.

Preliminary Data Analysis

In Table 1 (following page), we present descriptive statistics of five-year recidivism rates of vocational education completers versus partial-completers at York Correctional Institution. The population analyzed consisted of all inmates who were enrolled in any of the four vocational course offerings (culinary, cosmetology, hospitality and business) between 7/1/2010 and 6/30/2011 and who had left the institution at some point between then and now. Recidivism is operationalized as a return to York after having been released either to transitional supervision or discharged. Inmates who were hospitalized and then returned without incident were not considered to have recidivated.

Table 1.

Five-year recidivism rates of vocational education completers versus partial-completers: York (N = 274), 2011-2012.

According to the data (above), inmates participating in the hospitality program appear to have

	Culinary		Cosmetology		Hospitality		Business	
	Partial (n = 14)	Completers (n=15)	Partial (n = 33)	Completers (n=1)	Partial (n = 67)	Completers (n=37)	Partial (n = 123)	Completers (n=0)
H.S./GED	53% (7)	53% (7)	52% (17)	100% (1)	16% (11)	72% (27)	17% (21)	N/A
Reentry	0% (0)	0% (0)	6% (2)	0% (0)	4% (3)	8% (3)	33% (41)	N/A
Recidivate	69% (9)	53% (8)	36% (12)	0% (0)	20% (14)	12% (12)	53% (66)	N/A

the lowest recidivism rates. This program also has the widest gap in education level between its completers and partial completers, although both groups recidivated at lower levels than inmates from other programs. Enrollment in the reentry programs is very low across the board, which may account for some of the high recidivism rates, along with all of the other factors described in the qualitative results of this report. Although not included in this analysis, these recidivism rates should be compared to waitlisters or recidivism rates of ex-offenders released from CT institutions that do not offer culinary arts programming.

DISCUSSION

Research Question #1

In answering the first research question, ‘*To what extent does the culinary arts program within the CTDOC demonstrate adequate evaluability?*’ based on the data collected from the focus groups and data analysis, we find the fidelity of implementation of the culinary arts program is inadequate to enact a program evaluation (e.g., impact study) at this time. We recommend the CT USD#1 take the following actions, if the culinary arts program is to be considered evaluable:

Provide student inmates with equitable resources. Lack of adequate physical space is one reason why less than 20 percent of the inmate population receives educational services (Haulard, 2001). In Connecticut, three medium-security institutions and lower do not offer any culinary arts programming, and of the five (5) institutions that do, three (3) do not currently provide adequate physical space / proper equipment for their respective culinary arts programs to adequately teach the required curriculum. The result: many inmates are not provided with access to quality culinary arts programming. ***We recommend that CTDOC administration make a commitment to its vision by providing adequate culinary arts resources (i.e., physical space, equipment, and programming) in all level-3 security institutions and lower.***

Provide culinary educators with P-Cards. Culinary educators are unable to teach approximately 30-40% of the curriculum as required by the State Department of Education, due to the fact that they are not able to make small order purchases with purchasing cards (P-cards). Culinary arts educators currently place food orders through their respective kitchens, which must be bulk orders. This, however, prevents educators from teaching the preparation of higher cost food items like shellfish, fish, and specific cuts of meats because purchasing these items in bulk would be cost prohibitive. Providing culinary educators with access to P-cards, would allow them to purchase such items at a local grocery store, but the educators would still keep the purchasing under budget. This way, student inmates will be able to complete the required culinary arts curriculum, without creating a dramatic increase in the operating costs of the program. ***We recommend that CT USD#1 provide all culinary educators with P-Cards to make specialized food item purchases.***

Commit to providing student inmates internships. A quality culinary arts program must include: sufficient content (instructional hours), as well as work experience, and internship requirements (Hertzman, 2008; 2012). The CT USD#1 has coordinated several different types of culinary internships through cafes and catering services in the past; however, most of these programs have been terminated apparently due to previous political / personal reasons of the commissioner at the time, not due to concerns of safety or integrity of the programs. Culinary arts can provide an important service to the inmate population by preparing healthy food options to be sold in the commissary, versus heavily processed foods. Although an inmate run café currently is in operation at the DOC administration office in Wethersfield, all student inmates in culinary arts should be given the opportunity to have similar paid internships for at least the final two weeks of their program. This can be done by reopening the cafes and catering services that have been terminated or using culinary arts students to support the production of healthier food options in the commissary. ***We recommend that CTDOC create a plan to support all culinary arts programs to provide internship experiences for students.***

Create least restrictive student scheduling. Currently, mandated counseling / group programs conflict with the schedule of vocational education courses for many student inmates. In addition, it is common that student inmates withdraw from the program because they are transferred to other institutions. At best, these two issues result in student inmates having to miss substantial portions of their coursework. For example, one student inmate interviewed at York Correctional Institution stated

that she had to miss one out of every five days because of a scheduling conflict with her mandated group sessions. At worst, these issues prevent student inmates from successfully completing vocational education programs. We suggest that CTDOC consider an A-B schedule where education programming is held on opposite days as mandated counseling / group sessions. **We recommend that CTDOC collaborate with CT USD#1 to develop a least-restrictive schedule that creates the least number of scheduling conflicts for student inmates.**

Create more prison-to-work transitional supports. From our research, it is unknown whether or not ex-offenders in Connecticut have any direct supports in finding paid work in the field of culinary arts after they are released. This appears to be true for both ex-offenders placed on probation or those sent to halfway houses. **First, we recommend that CTDOC partner with the CT State Department of Labor to coordinate services to be able to track the employment rates of ex-offenders. Second, we recommend that the CTDOC collaborates with local civic agencies to develop local volunteers to assist all vocational and education completers with direct support in finding and maintaining employment related to their field of interest.**

Develop better data protocol. Across the facilities included in this study, we had difficulty finding accurate waitlist data going from previous years. It seems that each facility keeps a running waitlist record. Without accurate waitlist data, there lacks a sufficient control group to compare culinary arts participants to. **We recommend that CTDOC develops a consistent protocol for tracking accurate waitlist members (weekly, monthly, etc.).**

Research Question #2

In answering the second research question, ‘Considering the perspectives of culinary arts educators, student inmates, and of the literature, how should culinary arts function logically?’ we found the student inmates to have many parallel comments with the educators. Both groups called for: (a) more opportunities to cook and prepare food for authentic occasions / catering; (b) less restrictive scheduling, (c) the complete curriculum to be taught, and (d) meaningful support in finding work once released.

Research Question #3

In answering the third research question, ‘Is there accurate data to compare the recidivism rates of partial completers, non-completers (wait-listed), and those who did not apply to the culinary arts program?’, we found that the DOC recordkeeping does not contain accurate waitlists for vocational arts programs retrospectively. Thus, we could not use the waitlisted members from the 2010-11 year as a control group. Without having accurate waitlist data, we then were asked by Dr. Hynes to compare culinary arts completers and partial-completers to their peers in the other vocational education courses. Although we present initial data in this report to provide a baseline only, **we advise that an impact study not be conducted until the above-mentioned recommendations are met.**

In Conclusion

There is sufficient evidence to support the claim that the provision of quality vocational and education training is cost beneficial. In testing this claim within the State of Connecticut Department of Correction, an evaluability study was conducted to determine if a subsequent impact analysis was feasible. At this point an impact analysis is not recommended until certain steps are taken by the CTDOC, as recommended in this report.

We applaud the State of Connecticut's Department of Correction in taking the first step in seeking to further understand the inner-workings of its culinary arts programs and to identify steps to improve it to better assist inmates in leading more productive lives upon reentry. We commend this effort and hope that this report helps improve the quality of the culinary arts programming within the Connecticut DOC.

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APPENDIX A

Manson Youth Focus Group, July 17, 2015

On July 17th, 2015, researchers Michele Dischino and Jacob Werblow led a focus group with 11 youth currently enrolled in Culinary Arts Program at the Manson Youth Facility. Below are the themes identified from the participant responses:

Approximately, how long have you been in the culinary arts program? Why did you choose to participate?

- 8 months – paid experience; also past experience in cooking
- 8 months – variety of cooking
- 3 months – like to cook at home
- 8 months – gain experience in the field; see if he likes it
- 1 ½ years – gives me something to do
- 2 months – b/c I'm employed in the kitchen; also interested in the field
- 4 months – used to work in the kitchen and likes to learn how to cook
- 1 ½ years – past employment in the field, hands-on class; plans to work in restaurant industry after release
- 2 ½ years – creating stuff, cooking
- 2-3 months – loves to cook; also previously in culinary elsewhere (not sure whether this means another prison?)
- 6 months – wanted to be proactive

What have you learned in the program?

- Basic knife skills, sauces, health/ disease prevention, proper sanitation, baking, dough creating, making own pasta, variety of sauces, etc.
- All earned ServSafe certification

Benefits of the program

- Very hands-on, interesting teacher, who treats you like a person (not all staff treat us like real people), eat good food, we are allowed to serve and create the entire menu for graduation, keeps us out of trouble, work skills, working together, future planning / career planning...
- “Feel like part of something”

Ways program can be improved

- Expand the kitchen classroom & equipment so that we can cook more varieties of foods (less repetition), allow teachers to purchase other foods that we are required to cook (in the curriculum)
- Give us more opportunities to prepare foods for real functions, real people,
- 2.5 hour class too short, we can't complete many recipes properly, move to full day
- Reduce interruptions, 'lock-downs' / counts
- Support in finding careers in culinary arts – job corps, etc.
- If we successfully complete the program, make our parole easier (acknowledge us for working hard and bettering ourselves)
- We do talk some about transition to some extent but we could benefit from more discussion about future steps.

Miscellaneous

- Three students waited more than a year to get into the program; a couple got in quickly.

On July 28, 2015, researchers Michele Dischino and Jacob Werblow led a focus group with nine women currently enrolled in Culinary Arts Program at York Correctional Institution. Below are the themes identified from the participant responses:

Approximately, how long have you been in the culinary arts program?

- Started April 10, 2015
- Started last Friday (July 24, 2015)
- 5.5 mo
- 3-4 mo
- 5.5 mo
- 3 mo
- 4 mo
- Started June 5, 2015
- Started April 10, 2015

Why did you choose Culinary Arts?

- To become a better cook for my husband when I get out
- Better outlet to focus on in case I want to relapse
- “Awesome” class
- “Heard it was fun”
- To get “degree” ... refers to certificates of completion and ServSafe certification
- Worked in food industry previously and wanted ServSafe certification to open up more job opportunities
- Cooking is my passion
- “A lot of us come from places where we don’t get skills” ... this student was planning to take the finance class after culinary program
- To taste some things I’d never tasted before
- Adding healthy stuff to our lifestyles

What have you learned?

- How to make pizza, bake cookies, more things I can do with my kids when I go home, how to save money by making my own pizza, etc.
- Correct measurements

Ways program can be improved

- It would be nice if there were employers who would actually hire us when we get out; “we’re not just here to have fun.”
- Could there be priority for voc ed students to have access to reentry program (there seemed to be some confusion over whether acceptance into the reentry program was via lottery or not).
- Would like more advice on ways to stay busy after release (e.g., restaurants to volunteer); “When I get bored, I relapse.”
- Would like the program to be full-day, even if this means coming every other day.

- Students complained of frequently having to stop what they're doing and leave class because of "facility recalls." According to several students, these happen roughly once per week, sometimes up to three times in a single week. Students also described multi-day locks during which they were unable to attend class for several days at a time. Students asked whether there might be some way to not have these "lockdowns" affect the schools, especially when it's the male facility (a separate unit) where the triggering event took place.
- Students complained that their "OAP groups" often required that they miss class do to conflicting/simultaneous scheduling.
- Would like more opportunities to cook for other people; students referred to the "café project." – "Feedback is the best part of catering"
- Some students had lost "good days" off the end of their sentence because they had elected to leave a job at the institution in order to take a class, even though they'd spoken with their supervisor before making the decision.
- Some students had to miss class or arrive late because they were still waiting in the "Med line" for their prescription medications when it was time to leave for class. They have no control over when the Med line opens, how long it takes, or whether or not they will have transportation to class once they finish the Med line.
- Transportation to class is a problem for some ... they have no control over when the "Rover" arrives and if they miss it, they can't go to class. They get very little time to get on the Rover once it arrives ("first and last call" is given simultaneously). They don't get alarm clocks unless they can afford to buy them.

Miscellaneous

- All but two students had waited to get into the course; most waited a few months, one waited a year.
- Many procedures are inconsistent (e.g., some lost "good days" when they left a job to start a class, some didn't).
- Inconsistent information about class cancellations.
- Quality of counselors is inconsistent (more are poor than helpful).
- All feedback about the culinary arts instructor was excellent. The teacher makes a point to include some business pointers and "makes us want to stay in the class." Students appreciated "having a teacher who cares" and mention that many of the other staff that they interact with (esp. counselors) often do not treat them like 'real people..'
- Feedback from actual catering experiences while in the class was a highlight.
- Students commented on their distaste for the soy "pellets" they receive for meals and concern over the effect of their prison diet on their health. Four students had gained a significant amount of weight during their incarceration.

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