



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

# DEAR FRIENDS,

2020 was a historic year, one in which many of our community members faced isolation, loss, fear, frustration, and instability. It was also a year when individuals banded together to grow movements for social change, to support neighbors and loved ones, to fight and heal for the future we are building together. This report reflects the complexity faced by our community throughout 2020 while also reminding us of the reasons the work of building communities of learning and growth is more critical than ever.

For organizations and institutions offering higher education in prisons, the responses to Covid-19 varied widely. In 2020, UBB was fortunate to be able to continue with adapted programs throughout much of the year. Some highlights include that we were able to print and distribute enrichment course packets, develop and launch two rounds of our new Community Read Project program, offer up to three credit-bearing classes to all of our active students underway in degree programs, and cheer on 9 UBB college graduates as they completed their degrees!

While our enrollment and graduation numbers are fewer than we've seen in years past, we are proud of the resilience of our program. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the work of creatively keeping programs running. And above all, we have immense awe and praise for the resilience, flexibility, and commitment of our student community.

In this report you'll find, UBB's story of 2020 along with some portraits of the years prior so you can fully understand how we envision the scale of our work and how we have navigated this ongoing storm. We hope that when you look through this report, you'll feel the sense of inspiration and care that we feel in this work. Thank you for supporting what we do!

In gratitude and solidarity,  
University Beyond Bars





# MISSION

**University Beyond Bars (UBB) empowers prisoners to fulfill their potential through communities of higher learning that transcend prison walls.**



# VISION

**To replace incarceration with education and build a society where all people are given the chance to transform themselves and their communities.**

**We seek to break cycles of incarceration, strengthen families and communities, confront racism and classism, and promote personal achievement and social reintegration by providing transformational education opportunities.**

**Our mission is rooted in the belief that everyone has a right to education, regardless of identity, socioeconomic status, or circumstance.**

# OUR LEADERSHIP



## PRISONER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

OUR PAC IS COMPRISED OF

### **INCARCERATED STUDENT LEADERS**

WHO COLLABORATE WITH STAFF TO INFORM, EVALUATE, & DEVELOP  
OUR PROGRAM. THEY ARE A CRUCIAL PIECE OF UBB'S

### **PROGRAMMING & VISION-SETTING.**

THEY ALSO RECRUIT, TUTOR, & MENTOR OTHER STUDENTS.

WE BELIEVE THAT EMPOWERING THE VOICES OF THOSE

WHO HAVE **LIVED EXPERIENCES** IS ESSENTIAL

TO CREATING AND SUSTAINING A PROGRAM THAT IS BOTH

**EQUITABLE** AND **ACCOUNTABLE.**



# OUR STAFF



**JOEL STROM**  
(he/him)  
Executive Director

**CRYSTAL SONG**  
(she/her)  
Operations, Development,  
& Fundraising Manager

**MARGARET BURKE**  
(she/her)  
Program Director

**KELLY JOHNSON**  
(they/them)  
Community Outreach &  
Volunteer Engagement Manager

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Ray McFarland**  
Board Chair

**Antriksh Kandhari**  
Treasurer

**Rachel Oppenheim**  
Co-Chair Elect

**Kayleen Oka**  
Co-Chair Elect

**Jeff Conner**  
Secretary

**Gary Idleburg**  
UBB Co-Founder

**Carrie Matthews**  
Member

**Sherri Caldwell**  
Member

**Pamela Schwartz**  
Member

**Mary Helen Roberts**  
Member

**Benjamin Gauen**  
Member

**Aaron Borrero**  
Member

**Mari Borrero**  
Member



# HISTORY

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The value of higher education in prison has long been overlooked and underestimated, and government support of college-in-prison programs has varied over time. For instance, in 1991, there were 772 college-in-prison programs in 1,287 correctional facilities across the country. In 1994, the Violence Crime Control & Law Enforcement Act banned all prisoners from receiving federal financial aid. Washington State ended all funding that same year. By 1997, the number of college-in-prison programs had dropped to 8.

University Beyond Bars was founded in 2003 by a group of volunteers and incarcerated individuals in the Black Prisoners' Caucus at the Washington State Reformatory. Today, in one typical quarter, we enroll roughly 300 students in credit-bearing and enrichment courses. Nearly 70% are first-time college students, nearly half are people of color, and the majority will be released in 5 years or less. All classes are provided at no cost to students and are open to all prisoners regardless of identity, sentence type, sentence length, and more.

# PROGRESS



In 2017, UBB was selected by the U.S. Department of Education as one of 67 programs across the country to participate in Second Chance Pell, an Experimental Sites Initiative pilot project that temporarily restored financial aid for eligible incarcerated students.

At the end of 2020, with bipartisan support, Congress voted to permanently restore Pell grants for incarcerated students. This reversal of the 1994 crime bill is a huge victory for criminal justice advocates and will open up new pathways for incarcerated individuals to access education.

As prison education programs of all different models expand across the country, UBB will remain committed to creating the most complete college experience possible inside prison. We believe in robust, in-person instruction where students directly engage with and learn from one another. The value of higher education in prison is not just in the college degree or the number of credits, but in the culture of community and self-empowerment.

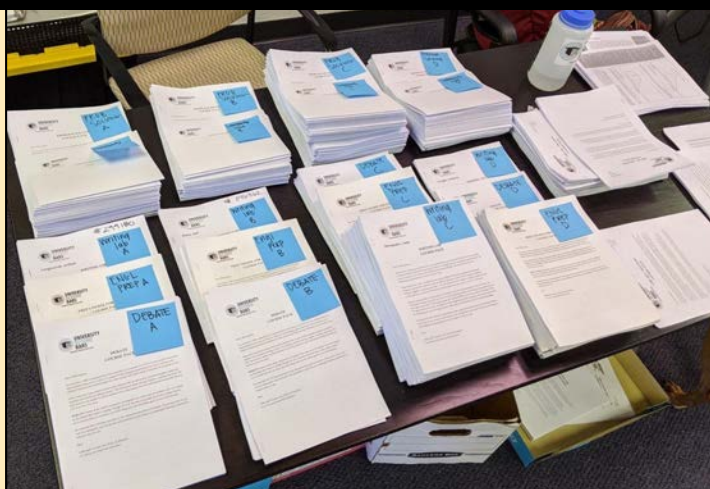


# ENRICHMENT CLASSES DURING COVID-19

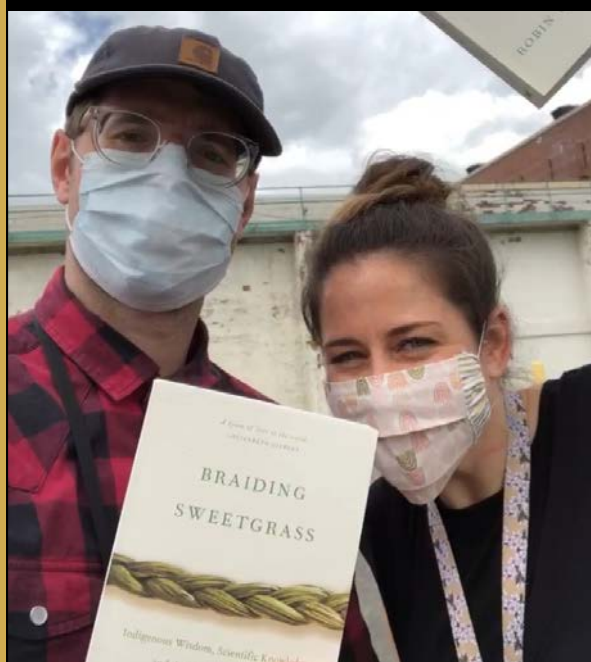
While volunteers were not permitted into WSR for most of 2020, UBB staff got creative and designed the following enrichment learning opportunities for our students

## 200+ COURSE PACKS for PRINT-BASED LEARNING

One of our print-based learning courses during COVID-19 was centered on self-care. UBB partnered with Collective Justice to develop a self-care course pack that promoted positive psychology. The course pack was made available to the entire WSR population



## COMMUNITY READ PROJECT



UBB created a common reading experience inside WSR, where students and outside volunteers read and then exchanged written discussions and reflections on a given book

**57 STUDENTS** RECEIVED COPIES OF  
**BRAIDING SWEETGRASS**  
BY ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

**57 STUDENTS** RECEIVED COPIES OF  
**UNTIL WE RECKON**  
BY DANIELLE SERED



# BACHELOR OF ARTS

Space is limited in UBB's BA classes due to tuition costs and class size limitations. In 2020, UBB had 12 students actively participating in BA courses. We expect this number to increase in 2021 as we graduate more students with their AA degrees who wish to continue onto their BA degrees.



IN 2020,

**7 NEW STUDENTS**

OFFICIALLY MATRICULATED INTO  
ADAMS STATE UNIVERSITY'S

**BACHELOR OF ARTS**

IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES  
PROGRAM. THEIR ACADEMIC  
EMPHASIS AREAS ARE

**ENGLISH** AND **SOCIAL  
SCIENCES**



## BA COURSE ENROLLMENT

**2020**

Spring: HIST436: History of American Thought  
Fall: ENGL355: The Novel

**2019**

Fall: SOC379: Society, Space, & the Law\*\*

**2018**

Spring: SOC379: Juvenile Justice\*\*  
Summer: ART305: Art Theory  
Fall: SOC379: Restorative Justice\*\*  
Fall: POLS379: Gender, Rights, & Power

*\*\*Faculty from the University of Washington Seattle and Bothell campuses administer mixed-enrollment courses annually. These courses take place in the prison and include both incarcerated and non-incarcerated students.*

# ASSOCIATE OF ARTS



**72 STUDENTS** COMMITTED TO THEIR EDUCATION

<b>SECOND CHANCE PELL COURSES</b>	<b>SELF-PACED COURSES*</b>
CHEM 110: Chemistry Lab	ENGL 112: Intro to Fiction
HUM 125: Hip-Hop Theory & Culture	MEY 100: Meteorology
ENGL101: English Composition	PHIL 120: Symbolic Logic
POLS 205: Political Economy	ENGL102: Composition II

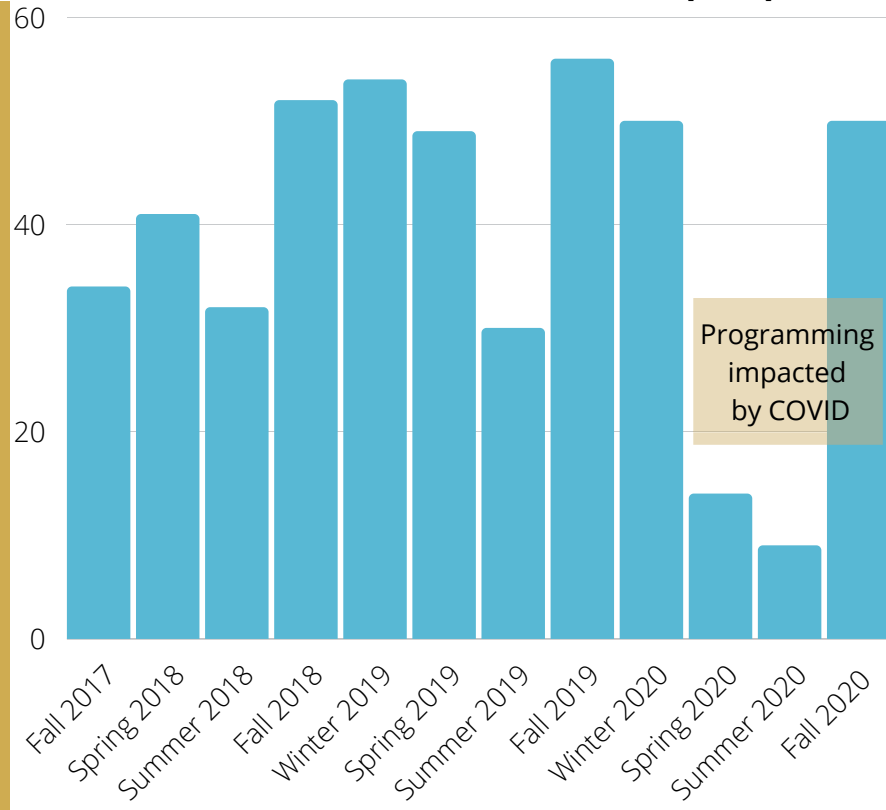
*\*Due to the impacts of COVID-19, UBB offered self-paced courses for students with 50+ credits. There were a total of 41 enrollments in self-paced classes in 2020.*



# SEATTLE CENTRAL COLLEGE

## ENROLLMENTS

Number of individual students enrolled per quarter

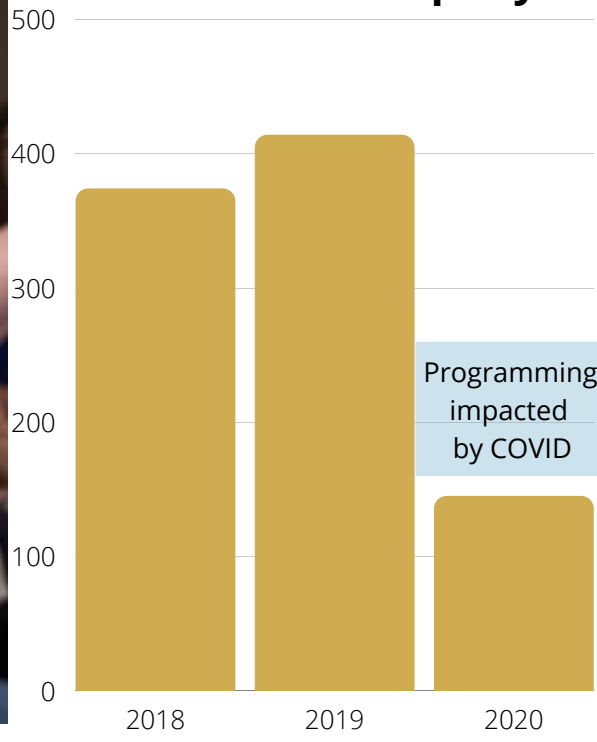


Thank you to Seattle Central College, our amazing partner with whom we administer our Associate of Arts courses. Together, we have built a strong degree pathway and continue to grow our student support services to ensure a robust and supported learning experience.

While facing so many hurdles from COVID-19 in 2020, Seattle Central College instructors and administrative partners proved to be incredibly creative, flexible, and resilient in their commitment to provide continued services to UBB's students.



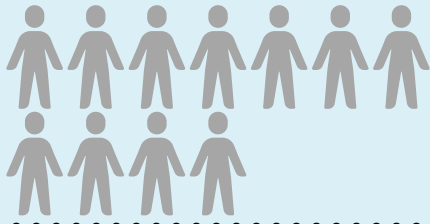
Total enrollments per year



# GRADUATION NUMBERS

**2018**

11 AA degrees

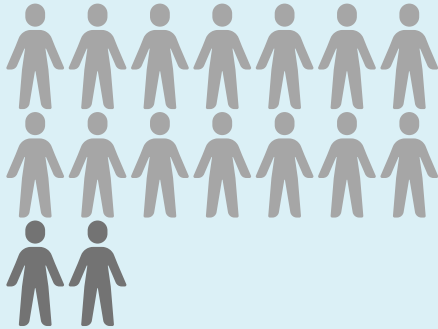


**2019**

14 AA Degrees

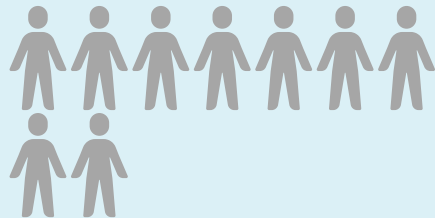
1 AS Degree

1 BA Degree

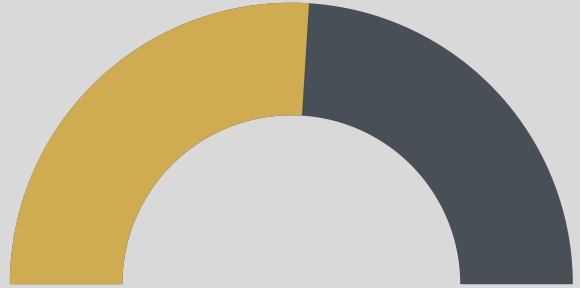


**2020**

9 AA degrees



52% of UBB graduates  
earn recognition on the President's List



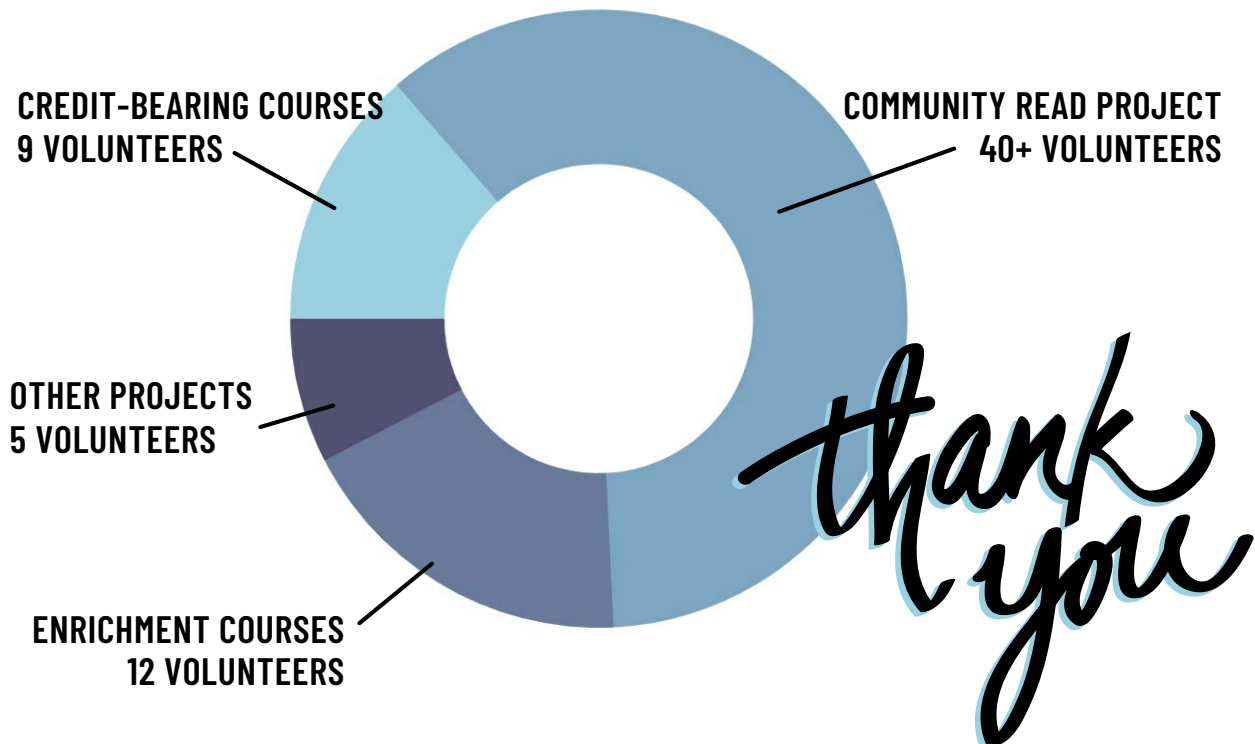
UBB graduates have an average GPA of 3.7





# VOLUNTEERS & INSTRUCTORS

Despite the limitations on programming that COVID-19 brought, more than 60 UBB volunteers continued their work with us in 2020 in new and innovative ways



## COLLEGE RUNWAY with JESSIE



**JESSIE SIMANTON**  
College Runway Advisor & Instructor

“

College onboarding programming, like the College Runway class, empowers students to direct their education and achieve their academic goals. It does this by helping students successfully navigate the higher education system and more meaningfully engage with advising supports. For UBB students, this type of programming also provides a platform to share information with peers, which builds community and enhances overall learning.

”

|| Winter 2020: 17 Runway Students || Summer 2019: 25 Runway Students ||

# TEACHING DURING COVID-19

## CHEMISTRY 110 with CAROLINE



“

As I reflect on what successes I experienced teaching for UBB during Winter of 2020 I feel that the real successes lay with my students. They worked with the hard concepts, senior students provided extra math and tutoring support. The community came together to ensure our students had the support they needed to complete the course regardless of circumstance. While this is a hallmark of the UBB community and nothing new, it is something very special about these students and this program.

Caroline Pew ”

## HIP HOP THEORY & CULTURE with LANGSTON



“

I can safely say that this was the best group of students and best overall class that I've ever taught. Each student was deeply engaged with the class materials. They showed deep interrogation and engagement in their writing assignments from start to finish. All in all, despite the Covid-19 related interruption, this was a very successful class and a truly remarkable experience.

Langston Wilkins ”



# TEACHING DURING COVID-19

## POLITICAL ECONOMY with VANESSA



“

Teaching during the pandemic was hard. I missed engaging with my students around course material and being able to troubleshoot their questions in real time. While teaching was difficult, I feel like my sense of community was strengthened during this process. Myself, Caleb, UBB staff, teaching assistants and students are weathering this storm together, which means being flexible and innovative each and every step of the way.

”

Vanessa Quince

## ENGLISH 101 with CALEB



“

As a teacher, I often feel that I learn as much--if not more--from my students as they do from me. Despite the obstacles posed by COVID-19, this remained the case for English 101 in Fall Quarter 2020. Together we read Colson Whitehead's speculative fiction novel, *The Underground Railroad* (2016). With the invaluable help of UBB TA Tomas Keen and Program Director Margaret Burke, the class was able to stitch together discussions of the novel through various modalities, including written exchange. I am coming away from the quarter not only with a deeper understanding of the book but with a renewed appreciation for such collective dialogue!

”

Caleb Knapp

# UBB ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

UBB ALLOWED ME TO INTERACT WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO REMINDED ME OF MY **HUMANITY AND WORTH.** THIS PAST YEAR HAS BEEN MY FIRST EXPERIENCE OF **FREEDOM** AS AN ADULT. I AM CURRENTLY EXPECTING MY **FIRST CHILD** AND AM IN THE PROCESS OF **STARTING MY OWN BUSINESS.** MY GOALS FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS ARE TO CONTINUE **SETTLING INTO EVERYDAY LIFE,** AND BEING A PRESENT & SUPPORTIVE **PARTNER AND FATHER**



*Jarrelle Marshall*



*Silas Robbins*

**PEOPLE SHOULD CARE** ABOUT PROVIDING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES TO THOSE INCARCERATED BECAUSE IT CAN **CHANGE A PERSON'S MINDSET** AND COMPLETELY ALTER THE COURSE OF SOMEONE'S LIFE IN A MORE **POSITIVE DIRECTION.** MY GOALS FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS ARE TO **BECOME A BETTER PERSON EVERYDAY** AND MAKE A **POSITIVE IMPACT** ON THOSE AROUND ME. I ALSO RECENTLY MADE THE DECISION TO **GO BACK TO SCHOOL IN THE SPRING.** **I HAVE MISSED IT TOO MUCH.**



# UBB ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

THANKS TO THE UBB COMMUNITY,  
I AM NOW EMPLOYED AS A  
**SERVICE MANAGER**  
AT AN AUTO DEALERSHIP IN SEATTLE,  
WHERE I AM **THRIVING**  
SINCE MY INVOLVEMENT WITH UBB AND  
WITH MY OWN RE-ENTRY CHALLENGES, I  
HAVE BECOME VERY INVOLVED IN  
**PRISON RE-ENTRY REFORM**  
AND PLAN TO EXPAND INTO A GREATER  
ROLE IN THE FUTURE.

SINCE I AM STILL RESIDING IN A DOC  
WORK-RELEASE FACILITY, MY MAIN  
IMMEDIATE GOAL IS TO GAIN  
**MY OWN RESIDENCE**  
AS SOON AS I AM ALLOWED. AFTER THAT,  
MY GOALS ARE FAIRLY AVERAGE:  
REBUILD A CREDIT HISTORY,  
ACCUMULATE SOME NICE THINGS  
AROUND ME, AND BEGIN TO GET OUT AND  
**SEE THE BEAUTIFUL  
WORLD AGAIN.**



*Kevin McMahon*



*Matthew Murphy*

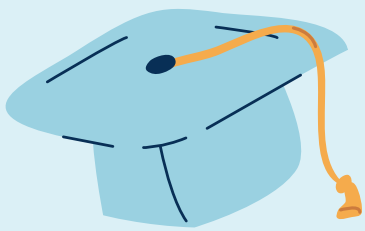
UBB HAS PROVIDED ME WITH THE  
SKILLS AND PRACTICES NEEDED TO  
**THINK CRITICALLY** & ENGAGE WITH  
**A CHILDLIKE CURIOSITY.**  
INSTILLED WITH A NEW SENSE OF  
SELF-WORTH, I FOUND MY  
**FREEDOM THROUGH EDUCATION.**  
I AM CURRENTLY TRANSITIONING OUT OF  
WORK RELEASE AND AM EMPLOYED WITH  
**COLLECTIVE JUSTICE (CJ).** AT CJ, WE  
ARE BUILDING **COMMUNITY-BASED  
RESPONSES TO HARM,** ROOTED IN  
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRINCIPLES OF  
ACCOUNTABILITY AND HEALING.  
AS FOR WHAT'S NEXT, I'LL CONTINUE TO  
BUILD WITH COMMUNITY,  
**DEEPEN MY KNOWLEDGE**  
AROUND TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE,  
AND GAIN SKILLS AROUND TECH &  
OFFICE CULTURE

# UBB ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

EDUCATION IN PRISON PROVIDES THE ABILITY TO SURVIVE INSIDE AND OUT, BY **BREAKING UP THE MONOTONY**, GIVING PURPOSE, PROVIDING CONNECTIONS & MAKING FUTURE GOALS A **REALITY**. AFTER RELEASING FROM PRISON AFTER 21 YEARS IN THE **MIDST OF A PANDEMIC**, I'VE BEEN ENJOYING TIME SPENT WITH **MY WIFE & KIDS** MORE THAN ANYTHING. OUR TWO 160 POUND ENGLISH MASTIFFS OFFER PLENTY OF **UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, TOO**. I'M CURRENTLY MANAGING OUR **FAMILY BUSINESS** WHILE ADAPTING TO THE SOCIALLY-DISTANT ATMOSPHERE. HOPEFULLY **WHEN COVID ENDS**, WE'LL BE ABLE TO WATCH OUR SON PLAY HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL, TRAVEL, AND **SEE OUR FRIENDS THAT WE MISS**



*Paul Sarkis*



## "WHEN YOU LEARN, YOU DON'T RETURN"

*Anthony W, UBB Student Leader*

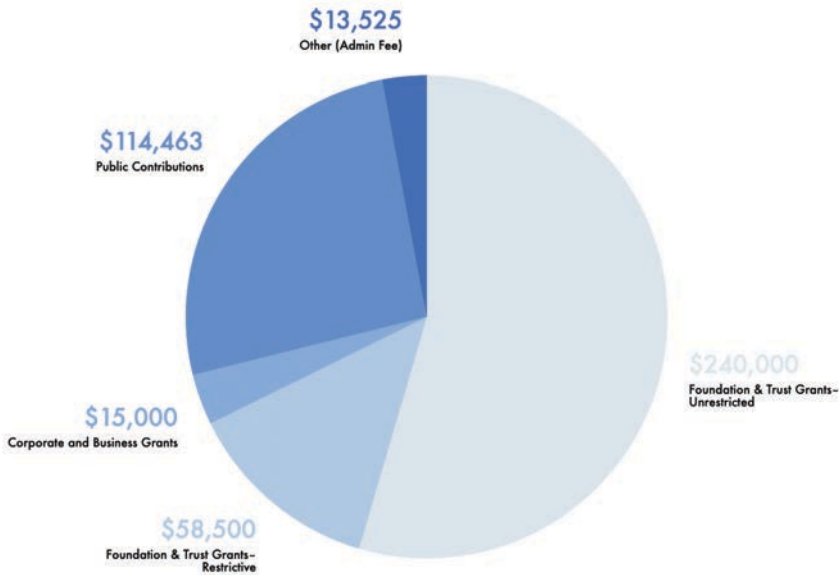




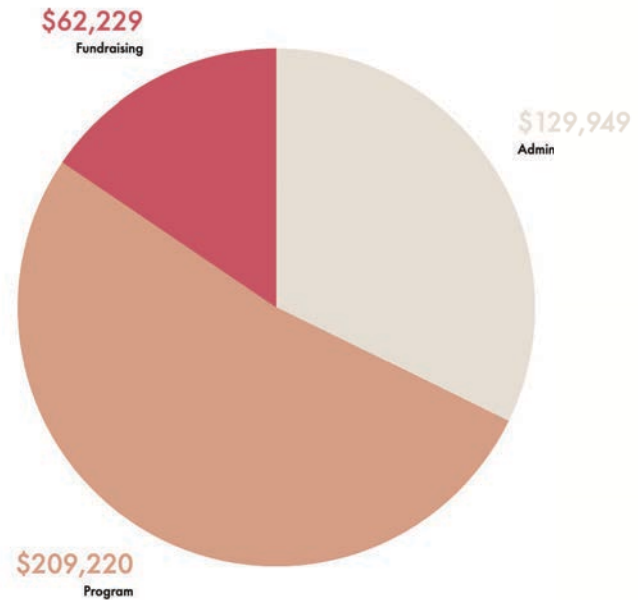
# FINANCIALS

Year Ending Dec 21, 2020

## Revenue (Total: \$441,488)



## Expenses (Total: \$401,268)



An additional \$54,000 was awarded to students through Second Chance Pell financial aid in 2020

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

Adams State University  
American Abatement & Demo  
API Chaya  
BeanWater Espresso  
BECU People Helping People Awards  
briana herman-brand  
Burg Criminal Defense  
Creag Foundation  
Collective Justice  
Common Justice  
Department of Corrections  
Doe Bay Resort  
Garneau-Nicon Family Foundation

General Assembly  
Freedom Education Project Puget Sound  
HEP Fundraising Collective  
Handcrank Films  
Humanities Washington  
Hudson Link  
Hunters Capital  
Ideoclick  
King County Employee Giving Program  
Milkweed Editions  
Northwest Asset Management  
Olson Foundation  
Rotie Cellars

Satterberg Foundation  
Seattle Central College  
Sustainability in Prisons Project  
Tennessee Higher Education  
in Prison Initiative  
Tiki Motors  
Unincarcerated Productions  
University of Washington  
UW Law, Societies, & Justice Dept  
Vera Institute  
Washington Women's Foundation  
Will & Will, PLLC

## AND COUNTLESS OTHERS!