

**Yale University President's Public Service Fellowship**  
**Summer 2021**

**Proposal for Fellow working remotely for organization**

- Organization:

Yale Prison Education Initiative at Dwight Hall

- Full street address of organization:

Physical Address: 67 High Street New Haven CT 06511

Mailing Address: PO Box 209008 New Haven CT 06520-9008

- Website:

[dwithhall.org/ypei](http://dwithhall.org/ypei)

- Name and title of person who will be the Fellow's direct supervisor:

Zelda Roland, Founding Director, Yale Prison Education Initiative at Dwight Hall

- Phone number and e-mail address of proposed direct supervisor:

Office: 203-432-9286

Cell: 203-903-4694

Email: [s.zelda.roland@yale.edu](mailto:s.zelda.roland@yale.edu)

- Placement dates:

May 26 – August 7

- Are placement dates flexible? Are you able to accommodate a Fellow working in a different time zone?

Yes, the dates are flexible, although ideal dates will still overlap as much as possible with Yale Summer Session dates, which YPEI follows in our programming. In 2020, YSS calendar ran May 25-July 31 (2021 dates TBA).

- Proposed 37.5 hour per week work schedule:

Full-time 37.5 hours/week; flexible hours depending on fellow's summer project, teams, and time zone. Approximately 2 hours/week minimum spent in YPEI staff/team meetings, and one hour per week in one-on-one mentorship meetings with supervisor.

---

- Organization description:

The Yale Prison Education Initiative at Dwight Hall expands upon existing Yale participation in prison education by offering access to Yale College courses and other programming to incarcerated students in Connecticut. College in prison is currently at the forefront of national conversations around access to higher education and criminal justice reform, and college in prison programs have proven their transformative and rehabilitative value both to underserved students of great potential in prison — who excel given the chance, who display extremely low rates of recidivism, and who go on to become leaders in their communities — and to instructors, for whom teaching in prison is an eye-opening reminder of the power of higher education. In creating this program, we seek to bring Dwight Hall's long-standing tradition of public service and social justice to Yale's academic mission in order to work together toward a better and more just society.

- Write a 1-2 sentence summary of the work that the Fellow would be conducting:

The fellow will assist in coordinating YPEI programming, including orienting, managing, and liaising with course instructors, guest lecturers, and volunteers; providing administrative and operations assistance including materials management; assisting with fundraising and grantwriting; and working with community partners and formerly incarcerated students on student re-entry in New Haven and local initiatives based around criminal justice reform.

- Write a more complete description of the specific project you propose and list the duties/outcomes expected of the Fellow.

This summer, YPEI at Dwight Hall enters its fourth year of offering Yale courses and programming to incarcerated students in Connecticut. To date, YPEI has fulfilled its mission by serving incarcerated students inside state correctional facilities with both credited and uncredited academic programming, and by working with formerly incarcerated students in the New Haven area. Summer 2021 marks a moment of transition and expansion for our program as we aim to admit a new cohort of students; expand programming to a second facility; pilot videoconferencing technology to offer remote classes inside CT DOC given the ongoing constraints of the pandemic; install a new fellowships program centered at Yale for formerly incarcerated students; and develop a degree partnership in New Haven so that we can begin to offer an associate's degree for incarcerated students in the state.

Our President's Public Service Fellow will have a range of core summer projects to choose from, depending on their interest matched with our needs, as well as a slate of regular duties and responsibilities to form a base for that work, which will also orient the fellow to our specific program as well as help them acquire a solid understanding of broader national field of higher education in prison.

Regular duties and potential summer projects (all remote) include:

- Coordinating with course instructors and incarcerated students on materials, assignments and assignment submission to support core programming. This involves determining materials and supplies needed by both students and faculty, procuring them, and facilitating their delivery to incarcerated students.
  - Keeping YPEI's public-facing and staff calendars updated.
  - Drafting regular newsletters for YPEI subscribers and for incarcerated students.
  - Maintaining and updating YPEI website including writing and publishing blog posts, sharing relevant news articles, and drafting press releases.
-

- Gathering testimony and feedback from incarcerated students and from campus faculty/volunteers in coordination with research partners.
  - Managing and updating YPEI’s “Job Board” that serves formerly incarcerated job-seekers and people interested in jobs in the field of higher education in prison.
  - Maintaining YPEI’s Transcription Network, currently comprised of over fifty Yale undergraduates and graduate students who may be dispersed around the world over the summer period, but who volunteer their time to type YPEI students’ handwritten essays into Microsoft Word documents. This involves loading student essays onto our internal server to make them available to volunteer transcribers, assigning them to transcribers, and then coordinating to ensure proper digital delivery to instructor/students as needed.
  - Managing the YPEI student request network, which supports incarcerated students in research projects, independent studies, materials needs, and miscellaneous requests. This may include procuring extra writing tutors, or subject-specific tutorials or guides depending on student needs that arise and in concert with on-campus academic resources including through our partners at the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning.
  - Helping organize supplementary workshops from Yale and the New Haven community, either remotely using videoconferencing or by correspondence (snail mail). This task relies on the creativity and vision of the individual fellow, and their ability to connect and communicate with potential guest speakers and to coordinate and curate viable workshops for incarcerated students.
  - Possibility of organizing a public-facing virtual event (for either Summer or Fall 2020) to highlight YPEI program activity and student and faculty accomplishments.
  - With the Director, virtually attending New Haven meetings, events, and roundtables related to prisons and re-entry, such as the New Haven Re-entry Round Table and the Women’s Resettlement Working Group.
  - Assisting in coordination with New Haven-based and statewide re-entry and other support organizations in building strategies to support the success of our increasing number of returning students. This may also involve researching reentry strategies and partnerships at other prison education programs, and coordinating with local colleges to help students continue their educational attainment.
  - Participating in building a new fellowships program to place formerly incarcerated alumni of regional higher education in prison programs in fellowship sites at Yale.
  - Possibility of providing grantwriting and development assistance.
- List specific skills/experience required for this work:

The ideal candidate should have excellent writing skills, be a good communicator (comfortable using the telephone), be comfortable with light technological assistance, be hard-working, problem-solving, and mature. The ideal candidate will be passionate about access to higher education in prison and criminal justice reform, and be comfortable working with a wide variety of stakeholders (although no past experience working in criminal justice is necessary).

- Equipment/resources you will provide to help Fellow conduct work:

Fellow will have access to robust YPEI staff orientation and training which will familiarize them with the operations of a rigorous college-in-prison program and help them gain an understanding of the national field both historically and in contemporary iterations. Fellow will be provided with tools for training and reflection and access to academic and knowledge partners across the university and community partners and leaders in our city, state, and region.

YPEI will provide fellow with all necessary software and information required to do the work described,

---

including access to business email and phone number. Fellow will be added to our organizational Slack account and central databases for access to program information and to facilitate ease of communication with other staff and fellows. An active summer staff serves both as a supportive community with whom the fellow can collaborate as well as a resource for achieving summer goals.

- Briefly describe the work that Yale PPSF Fellows have done with your organization in the past and present. If you have not worked with Yale Fellows, describe any work that Yale students have done with your organization.

We hosted our first PPSF Fellow in Summer 2020 and it was an overwhelmingly positive experience that has resulted in a mutually supportive ongoing relationship between our program and the Fellow, and that also resulted in some incredible project outcomes that have continued to benefit incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people in our state. In particular, the Fellow took on an urgent advocacy project that focused on voting rights for currently incarcerated citizens who were eligible voters in the 2020 elections but who were not given a real mechanism for exercising this right. The Fellow participated in state-wide convenings and working groups on this issue, learning from stakeholders and those directly impacted, conducting research, and driving planning conversations about ballot access. Eventually, the Fellow partnered in this work with legal clinics to ensure voter registration and absentee ballot delivery for incarcerated eligible voters in Connecticut, who are also continuing to work on expanding voting rights for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people in our state. The Fellow also worked on grantwriting projects (and received grantwriting training, a skill that the Fellow has since reported back has been a helpful professional skill for their current work positions), and research support for incarcerated students engaged with YPEI programming. The Fellow conducted background research in preparation for our degree partnership, and conceived of and created our online YPEI Jobs Board which has now become a permanent and popular feature of YPEI's work, serving justice-impacted job-seekers in our region, as well as job-seekers who are interested in careers in higher education in prison.

*Other past work with Yale students:*

In Summer 2017, we worked with three undergraduate fellows — funded by the Schell Center at Yale Law School, Yale Education Studies Program, and Dwight Hall Summer Fellowship — who were crucial to developing community relationships for YPEI. One fellow produced a researched report on higher education access in prison as seen through the international human rights law. All three collaborated on producing a volunteer training manual that is still used by volunteers in our program and at the Yale Undergraduate Prison Project.

In Summer 2018, we worked with two undergraduate fellows — one funded by the Liman Center at YLS and a second funded by Dwight Hall Summer Fellowship — who were crucial in executing our first summer of offering classes. Fellows fulfilled all responsibilities listed above, while helping to form the operational rhythm of our program.

In Summer 2019, we worked with four undergraduate fellows — funded by Dwight Hall Summer Fellowship and the Yale DSA — who helped us expand our programming and who delved into projects varying from reentry to program organization and streamlining, to orienting and recruiting new volunteers and guests, to providing direct tutoring assistance to YPEI students.

In Summer 2020, we worked with undergraduate fellows funded by the Dwight Hall Summer Fellowship, YANA-Dwight Hall Summer Fellowship, and the DSA, who worked largely on facilitating correspondence-based (snail mail) programming for incarcerated students amid the challenges of the

---

pandemic and planning upcoming programming and partnerships. You can read more about YPEI's creative writing workshop [here](#).

In addition to summer fellows listed above, we have engaged over 60 undergraduates in regular volunteering, including through the transcription network (described above). Graduate students have participated in YPEI as Graduate Professional Development Fellows and Graduate Professional Experience Fellows.

In 2019-2020, undergraduate student editors of the Yale Daily News worked with our students on writing op-eds published in the YDN, and another collective of undergraduates from Yale's Ethnicity Race & Migration Program conceived of, organized, and facilitated a semester-long seminar series bringing together ER&M faculty to work with our students in prison.

Undergraduate and graduate students alike have regularly noted that working with YPEI was a highlight of their entire Yale experience that provided them with mentorship opportunities, a supportive team environment, opportunities for personal and professional growth, and a way to leverage their Yale affiliation to serve our local community and to fight for the right of higher education access for incarcerated students in our state.

---