

Collaboration between academics and correctional professionals can foster transformative ideas. To unlock this potential, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC) and Penn State's Criminal Justice Research Center (CJRC) hosted *Corrections Innovation Day 2024* on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. This event brought together a diverse array of correctional practitioners and academic researchers for a one-day conference, generously sponsored by Arnold Ventures. Through a series of small-group discussions, seventy participants shared insights, tackled challenges, and brainstormed testable solutions to four key issues currently facing Pennsylvania's correctional system. Issues discussed included: 1. Recidivism Reduction, 2. PA DOC Staff Wellness, 3. Reducing In-Prison Violence, and 4. Restrictive Housing (Solitary Confinement) Reform. Each group discussion was professionally facilitated by staff from Penn State's Survey Research Center, and documented by trained notetakers who documented each discussion. A report summarizing the *Innovation Day's* organization, planning lessons learned, discussion themes, and next steps is available on CJRC's website. By all accounts, the *Innovation Day* was a success. As illustrated in the quotes below, participants appreciated the inter-disciplinary dialogue, researcher-practitioner connections, and innovative ideas fostered by the event:

"I really appreciated having all of the outside influence from educators, professors...from outside the Department of Corrections...We talk about being institutionalized so much – when you work inside [prison] all the time and you don't get outside perspectives – you're institutionalized. So you know just hearing their ideas, their perspective just kinda' opened up new ideas...it was extraordinary to me some of the ideas that they threw around that we can do for our own and for the mental wellness of our staff. I'm really excited to take those back to SCI Greene." – *Natalie Gordon, Corrections Officer, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections*

"I really thought it was time well spent. I thought recidivism reduction plans that were coming up and people's ideas and recommendations were very interesting, dynamic in some ways, and the nice thing is that I believe – truly believe – that this is going to have some follow up to it." -- *Daniel McIntyre, Director of Reentry, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections*

"This [event] helped bring so much context to...the type of research that I'm normally doing. I think that it's going to inform the way that I...interpret things a lot moving forward. Researchers and practitioners definitely need to talk more. I think that it would make science progress a lot more quickly." - *Claudia Anderson, Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Florida State University*

"As academics, we often work really apart from those on the front lines. This is such a really rare but valuable opportunity to connect with people working directly in the system, and I'm really appreciative of it." – *Michael Mueller Smith, Associate Professor of Economics, University of Michigan*

"I think it went really well. It was a really interesting mix of practitioners and academics. It allowed us to introduce ideas from academia, and them to educate us on the realities of working and living in the world of corrections. So I thought it was a great day." – *Natasha Frost, Associate Dean of Research and Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Northeastern University*