

10 detainees join St. Louis County Justice Center's newest program, take college credit courses

"I would've never guessed by coming to jail that I would be placed in a position to actually better my life for myself and my children," Randol McCabe said.



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ST. LOUIS COUNTY, Mo. — A college course is changing the course of Randol McCabe's life.

"I would've never guessed by coming to jail that I would be placed in a position to actually better my life for myself and my children," McCabe said.

McCabe already has his GED and now he's trying to improve his skills to become a crisis interventionist once he's released.



He's been at the St. Louis County Justice Center for 14 months.

McCabe is one of 10 detainees apart of the newest program at the [St. Louis County Justice Center](#).

While the jail has offered college prep courses before, this is the first-time providing college-credit classes.

St. Louis Community College is providing the curriculum to offer introduction classes.



Credit: KSDK
Randol McCabe.

Due to COVID-19, classes need to have 12 people maximum.

The first college credit classes are History 101 and Reading 100. Next semester, it'll focus on math.

Director of Justice Services Scott Anders said he puts his trust in education, which could lead to employment.

"Employment is the biggest predictor of success, people that are employed are 75% more likely to be successful and not re-commit offenses once released," he adds.

According to the Deputy Chief of Communications, the current jail population is more than 900:

- Of that jail population, 80% are being held pre-trial, which means they have not been convicted of a crime.
- 128 residents have their GED.
- 300 have high school diplomas.
- None of them have graduated from college.

Anders said, "They start the process here. The goal is for them to continue when they are released."

Tracy Barron is currently one of the teachers.

She is the Department Chair for Reading and English at St. Louis Community College.

"We work on note taking skills and study strategies. It's been an extremely positive experience. The students are engaged," Barron added. "I'm really proud of them and it's been a really good semester."

Barron believes gaining a degree is invaluable.

She said, "It's something that nobody can take away."

For McCabe, he's ready to share his new set of skills once he's released.

"I've learned patience, working with others, working in groups," he told 5 On Your Side.



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He said he has been able to learn brighter days are ahead.

McCabe added, "It's given me milestones to achieve something positive in my life. Given this time in jail and this opportunity to advance my career, it's really given me to gain the tools to acknowledge that I needed this time to get back on track. I know that God is good, and he's work behind the scenes when I thought I was alone. I'm glad I was able to come here and change the course of my life."

Anders explained there's also an organization working with the department, which will donate laptops once released detainees show verification, they've registered for college courses.

Currently, the department is in the process of applying for grants to expand the program.

On Thursday, the first cohort will graduate and resume classes on March 20.

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