



## Board of Directors

# Information Packet

### Our Mission:

The Prison Scholar Fund (PSF) has a mission of providing education and employment assistance to help incarcerated people succeed and thrive in society while avoiding homelessness and the revolving door of reincarceration.

The PSF is an innovative, educational organization serving prisoners and those recently released, as well as family members and the community at large. Our programs focus on two areas: postsecondary education and workforce development.

The PSF is committed to helping women and men coming out of prison develop tools valued in the marketplace, and reconcile with themselves and their loved ones. It's not only the right thing to do; it's in all our best interests. By doing so, we lower the public tax burden and create safer communities for everyone.

For more information, please visit the Prison Scholar Fund's website:  
[www.prison scholars.org](http://www.prison scholars.org).

## Our Vision:

The Prison Scholar Fund envisions a nation and world that values humanity and invests in education for all.

## Our Values:

The Board, staff, and volunteers are guided by the following set of core values and beliefs:

1. We believe in second chances and self-improvement.
2. When educated, every individual offers the greatest capacity to apply his or her human capital in productive and contributory ways.
3. The United States can become a more secure and competitive nation when high-risk populations are offered a long-term, sustainable path toward self-improvement and positive choices.
4. To achieve the strongest educational outcomes for our nation requires systemic change.
5. Transparency and accountability are cornerstones of integrity and institutional success.
6. A diverse Board and staff, representative of the diversity of our community, provide the best leadership for the organization.
7. Informed and engaged leadership is essential to the sustainability of both the organization and its work.

## Organizational Culture:

Partners self-select into an atmosphere where they strive for excellence. The passionate embrace of the Prison Scholar Fund's cultural philosophy is non-negotiable: intellectually challenging, socially beneficial, passionately engaging, and undeniably fun. It's the kind of thing we all like to do: very ambitious and full of things that can easily go wrong. We meet our challenges with humor and respect.

## Overview of the Prison Scholar Fund

The Prison Scholar Fund (PSF) was informally founded in 2004 to give education access and opportunity to incarcerated individuals. In 2005, the PSF awarded its first scholarship to Robert Garland, a Californian inmate, for a creative writing course at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Since our founding, we have supported 128 students nationwide.

A large contribution enabled the PSF to receive 501(c)(3) recognition in 2006. By the end of 2014, the PSF had achieved amazing success. With an audacious mission, one of prisoners helping educate other prisoners, the PSF has raised approximately \$60,000 in support of correctional postsecondary education, from prison. Numerous contributions from the public and charitable foundations include notable receipts originating from the Myers Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, the Bannerman Foundation, and multiple contributions from the Milken Family Foundation.

Outstanding recipients include Eugene Dey, who received his Associate in Arts degree from Coastline Community College, in 2009. Eugene has been released and has launched a startup near San Francisco helping returning citizens integrate back into society. Arturo Novoa, likewise, received his Associate in Arts degree from Coastline Community College in 2010, while he was incarcerated in California's notorious Pelican Bay State Prison.

In Q3 2019, Robert Wood, the PSF's first MBA student, was released under the First Step Act and is transferring his courses to University of Calif. San Diego to pursue his MBA on campus. Tony Curtis and David Garma, incarcerated in Centinela State Prison in Imperial, Calif., are receiving their associate degrees in December 2019. The PSF will be on site to celebrate their success with them.

Additionally, the PSF successfully secured funding from the Myers Foundation to engage the accounting firm of Watson & McDonell, PLLC, in Seattle, Washington, which served as our independent auditor.

The PSF has shown access to education opportunity enables incarcerated individuals to change their lives for the better. Our targeted approach of providing real change through real results, lowers recidivism rates, and enables the communities in which we all live and serve to be inherently safer and the chance for everyone to thrive without barriers.

## Notable events:

### 2015

The PSF won First Place in the 2015 Social Venture Partners Fast Pitch competition as start-up nonprofit of the year. We received scholarship support to send its CEO Dirk van Velzen to the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Executive Program in Social Entrepreneurship.

### 2016

PSF was recognized as a finalist in the Classy Awards for innovative nonprofits in 2016 and 2017; CEO Dirk van Velzen's "Opening Prison Doors" was published in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*; was invited to apply to the Shorty Social Good Awards which recognizes the initiatives that brands, agencies, and nonprofits are taking on to make our world a better place.

### 2017

PSF was invited to participate in PwC's Points of Light, Civic Accelerator; welcomed into "Unlocked Futures" accelerator program in partnership with musician John Legend, New Profit Foundation, and Bank of America.

### 2018

Prison Scholars Robert Wood and Jeromy Willis became first MBA students; PSF presented to Congressional leaders about Pell grant reform; PSF CEO Dirk van Velzen presents at ASU+GSV Summit in San Diego, and was invited to present at Google's Lunch & Learn in Mountain View, Calif.; and supported voting rights for system-impacted people in Florida.

### 2019

Invited into JustLeadershipUSA's "Leading with Conviction" advanced leadership development program; second push for Pell grant reform in D.C.; invited to the American Enterprise Institute's Leadership Network; started "Our Social Impact" podcast to reach into new audiences and networks.

## Board of Directors Guidelines and Commitments

A nonprofit Board brings together people from diverse backgrounds and points-of-view to provide leadership, vision, policy-setting, and oversight to the operations of an organization.

Board members of the Prison Scholar Fund commit to the following:

1. Attend all Board meetings/retreats if possible. If expecting to be absent, call the Board Chairperson ahead of time.
2. Give or get an annual gift to the PSF in an amount that is significant to you. We ask that PSF Board members consider the PSF a philanthropic priority and make annual gifts that reflect that priority. So that PSF can credibly solicit contributions from foundations, organizations, and individuals, PSF expects to have 100 percent of Board members make an annual contribution or help raise an amount that is commensurate with their capacity.
3. Actively participate in ensuring adequate resources through fundraising.

All Board members are to sign a statement of commitment (found on the last page of this document).

## Board of Directors Expectations

The Prison Scholar Fund's Board has very distinct duties different from those of executive management. Executive management manages while the Board oversees. The Prison Scholar Fund reserves the right to select and/or replace the CEO, amend Bylaws, approve the annual budget and long-term plans, fill interim Board vacancies, as well as establish committees and appoint Board members to such committees.

Basic Roles and Responsibilities: Board members of the Prison Scholar Fund accept primary responsibility for the following:

Under well-established principles of nonprofit corporation law, a Board member must meet certain standards of conduct and attention in carrying out his or her responsibilities to the organization. These standards are usually described as the Duty of Care, the Duty of Loyalty, and the Duty of Obedience.

- Board members must exercise reasonable care when making decisions as stewards of the organization.
- Board members should never use information obtained as a member of the Board for personal gain, but always act in the best interest of the organization.
- Board members are responsible for overseeing the use of donated funds to fulfill the organization's mission.

The Board will support the work of PSF and provide mission-based leadership and strategic governance. While day-to-day operations are led by PSF's CEO, the Board-CEO relationship is a partnership, and the appropriate involvement of the Board is both critical and expected. Specific Board Member responsibilities include:

- Leadership, governance, and oversight.
- Serving as a trusted advisor to the CEO as s/he develops and implements PSF's strategic plan.
- Reviewing outcomes and metrics created by PSF for evaluating its impact, and regularly measuring its performance and effectiveness using those metrics; reviewing agenda and supporting materials prior to board and committee meetings.
- Approving PSF's annual budget, audit reports, and material business decisions; being informed of, and meeting all, legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
- Contributing to an annual performance evaluation of the CEO.
- Assisting the CEO and Board Chair in identifying and recruiting other Board Members.
- Partnering with the CEO and other board members to ensure that Board resolutions are carried out.
- Serving on committees or task forces and taking on special assignments.

- Representing PSF to stakeholders; acting as an ambassador for the organization.
- Ensuring PSF's commitment to a diverse Board and staff that reflects the communities PSF serves.

#### Legal Issues and Operations - the fiscal and legal health of the organization

- Create and maintain policies, by-laws, and minutes.
- Monitor adherence to legal standards and ethical norms.
- Elect officers and secure appropriate Board liability insurance.
- Recruit and orient new Board members.
- Annually assess Board performance.

#### Planning and Oversight of Programs and Services - setting direction and monitoring progress

- Ensure effective organizational planning; assist in the implementation and monitoring of the organization's overarching goals.
- Organizational planning includes a strong vision to set the course for the future, strategic planning to meet the mission and achieve overarching goals.
- Determine, monitor and strengthen programs and services; monitor for mission drift and effectiveness.

#### Human Resources - building and maintaining organizational capacity

- Select the CEO and achieve consensus on the CEO's responsibilities.
- Annually evaluate and approve the compensation of the CEO.
- Adhere to the Prison Scholar Fund grievance policies; follow a clear procedure for managing grievances.
- Respect Board/staff boundaries.
- Approve all new staff positions, considering the financial implications.
- Support the CEO; make sure the CEO has the moral and professional support necessary to further the goals of the organization.

#### Public Relations - the public face of the organization

- Enhance the organization's public standing.
- Serve as an ambassador from the organization to the community at large.
- Be able to articulate the organization's mission, accomplishments and goals to the public; garner support from the community.

- Advise the CEO on public relations, marketing, and communications.
- Understand the connection between community relations and fund development.

Fund Development - ensuring adequate resources to enable the organization to fulfill its mission

- Monitor income revenue.
- Review and set revenue goals appropriately tied to program expense while keeping in mind the strategic mission/plan of the organization.
- Contribute skills, knowledge and experience as appropriate.
- Financially support the organization by becoming a major donor; every Board member is a donor.
- Assist in the planning of fundraising events and recruitment of volunteers; attend events.
- Advise the development committee and staff on prospect names, request levels and timing of solicitations.
- Accept and follow through on specific assignments in support of fund development.
- Assist the development committee and staff in asking for specific gifts.

Fiscal Oversight - overseeing the fiscal health of the organization

- Assist in developing the annual budget and ensuring adequate financial controls are in place.
- Monitor budget reports.
- Set revenue and expense policies.
- Approve investment policies.
- Ensure annual audits (or reviews based on budget size) occur and adhere to recommendations.

### Board of Directors Skills and Qualifications

The Prison Scholar Fund strives to have a diverse Board that possesses the following characteristics among its members:

- A strong commitment to helping the underserved and disadvantaged.
- A strong interest in education and prisoner's rights.

- A wide range of experience and skills in areas such as fundraising, finance, volunteer coordination, event planning, arts/nonprofit management, community outreach, strategic planning and organizational development.
- People who are very committed to fulfilling the Prison Scholar Fund's mission and are willing to actively take on tasks to sustain the organization's operations.
- Individuals who have a sense of humor, practice open communication, and truly want to serve toward the good of the Prison Scholar Fund over personal agendas.

### Board Officers - Roles & Responsibilities

The Prison Scholar Fund Board has three-year, renewable terms.

**Board Chairperson** He/she provides leadership to the Board of Directors and partners with the CEO to achieve the Prison Scholar Fund's mission. The major duties include developing the agenda for and chairing the Board meeting, appointing committee chairs, leading the Board's strategic planning process, and guiding the Board's actions with respect to organizational priorities and governance. The Chair also plays a leading role in fundraising, and informally monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the Board members.

**Board Secretary** He/she maintains and ensures the effective management of the Prison Scholar Fund's records. The major duties include taking and managing Board meeting minutes, distributing Board minutes and determining the applicability of the Prison Scholar Fund's legal documents (by-laws, etc.) to Board actions.

**Board Treasurer** He/she oversees the Prison Scholar Fund's finances. Major duties include working with the CEO to administer the fiscal matters of the organization, providing the annual budget to the Board for approval, ensuring that the Board is adequately informed about the Prison Scholar Fund's financial position, and developing/monitoring effective financial policies and procedures.

## Board Committees

The Prison Scholar Fund has established the following standing committees. In general, committees are responsible for making policy recommendations to the Board and for implementing tasks assigned by the Board. The CEO will serve as staff liaison to all Board committees. Each committee will meet monthly or bi-monthly and regularly report on its activities to the Board.

### Executive Committee

This Committee shall assist the Board of Directors in overseeing the management compensation policies and practices, including (1) making recommendations to the independent directors with respect to the compensation of the CEO in accordance with objective, documented and comparable information; (2) reviewing and approving the compensation of the other managers and employees who have substantial influence over the affairs of the PSF ("key executives"); (3) reviewing and approving management incentive compensation policies and programs; (4) reviewing and approving bonus compensation programs for employees and exercising discretion in the administration of such programs and (5) and for ensuring that compensation is tied to the achievement of predetermined performance goals that are keyed to mission-related accomplishments.

### Board Development Committee

This Committee (of existing Board members) ensures effective Board processes and determines Board composition priorities. Committee members meet with prospective Board members, recommend candidates for Board membership, and ensure that new members have adequate Board orientation. They also present the slate of Board officers for approval.

### Fundraising Committee

This Committee oversees the development and implementation of the fundraising plan that uses a variety of strategies to solicit funds for the Prison Scholar Fund. Committee members monitor fundraising efforts to ensure ethical and effective practices that all Board members are involved, and that donors are acknowledged appropriately. Includes non-Board members.

### Communications Committee

This Committee oversees the development and implementation of the PSF's internal and external communications strategies.

### Volunteer Development Committee

This Committee oversees the development and implementation of the

volunteer development plan. Committee members will prioritize volunteer skill needs and assist in the recruitment of volunteers. Includes non-Board members.

#### Scholarship Committee

This Committee evaluates the scholarship applications and awards support to inmates who appear sincere about changing their lives through education. Committee members assess incarcerated students for funding by considering the efficacy of correctional education, the applicants' presentation of a coherent educational plan, and the strength of the applicants' character. Past academic performance is only relevant for previous awardees. May include non-Board members.

The Prison Scholar Fund  
Board Service Commitment Pledge

I, \_\_\_\_\_, recognize the important responsibility I am undertaking in serving on the Board of Directors, and hereby pledge to carry out in a trustworthy and diligent manner the duties and obligations of my role as a Board member.

My role: I acknowledge that my primary roles as a Board member are: (1) to contribute to the defining of the organization's mission, and governing the fulfillment of that mission; and (2) to carry out the functions of Board members as stated in the Bylaws.

My role as a Board member will focus on the development of Board policies that govern the implementation of institutional plans and purposes. This role is separate and distinct from the role of the CEO, who generally determines the means of implementation. I understand, however, that the Prison Scholar Fund is at a stage in its organizational development where Board members must contribute to specific implementation tasks assigned through Board and committee work.

I Pledge:

- To serve a three-year term (with the option of renewing).
- Attend all Board meetings/retreats if possible. If expecting to be absent, call the Board Chair ahead of time.
- Give or get an annual gift to the PSF in an amount that is significant to you. We ask that PSF Board members consider the PSF a philanthropic priority and make annual gifts that reflect that priority. So that PSF can credibly solicit contributions from foundations, organizations, and individuals, PSF expects to have 100 percent of Board members make an annual contribution or help raise an amount that is commensurate with their capacity.
- Actively participate in ensuring adequate resources through fundraising
- To keep confidential information confidential.

If, for any reason, I find myself unable to carry out the above duties as best as I can, I agree to resign my position as a Board member/officer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date