

FS News: Back to Learning Edition Aug 2021

Hi Fair Shake colleagues!

Sorry this back-to-school newsletter is tardy.

Fair Shake has cranked up several notches...but there's still just one person here, doing what I can with what I have. My email replies to you all have been a little curt (sorry for this, too) which is probably the 'new normal' since people are finding Fair Shake in rapidly growing numbers. As you all know, I've created Fair Shake to serve multiple stakeholders across the entire nation, so I'm excited to know that folks are finding it: employers, families, friends, case workers, social workers, parole and probation, corrections folks, non-profits and more. Most, however, don't expect to find a self-serve do-it-yourself center, so it takes extra time to get them started...via email (10-20 each day) and phone calls (the phone rings constantly). This also includes people who write in (60-80 letters each week, including several that are long, hand-written letters with their story and, many times, specific requests and, as you know, messages that come in here, through Trulincs, at a rate of about 30 each day. So with that, please know that I'm 'dancing as fast as I can' and might need to be curt so that I can get to everyone! Thanks for your understanding. Ubuntu!

I can't say all that without adding a crucial consideration: Fair Shake's newsletter subscribers (you!) give me the most amazing support! Thank you! A lot of people who contact me have high projections and expectations ...even though they aren't paying me. Readers here will send emails to me – often – simply to say 'thanks' or 'love the newsletter' or to share a personal story or joke or poem, etc...that lifts my spirits and connects us as humans, instead of treating me like a 'service bot'. Thank you all! You give me the power and patience and energy to deal with projecting and expecting people. You remind me what this is all about: building our safety net together.

Thank you, too, donors! Several folks have made donations after receiving stimulus money, and I'm happy to report that the support will stimulate print production of the new Ownership Manual (OM), along with the continuation of the newsletter. Thanks for keeping this awesome connection / conversation going, donors! We are ALL very lucky ~ :)

Speaking of the OM: all of the documents are written and now it's time for the organization and editing process. I'm adding at least 50 pages!

I've also been working on the website a lot. There are a lot more resources in the directory, several new pages on the site, and a lot of new information on the existing pages. It's getting quite an update ~ :) I'm looking forward to sending it out to the institutions with the new OM included!

Okay...enough about me, now it's time for BACK TO SCHOOL NEWS:

STUDIES ARE FINE, BUT GET YOUR SKILLS TOGETHER, TOO!

I've been hearing that although employers appreciate an applicant's certificates and degrees, they now want to know that the student can also demonstrate skills. Certificates demonstrate knowledge, which is good, apparently employers have been a little frustrated by hiring book-smart people who have not given equal time to skills building. Demonstrating skills, the old-fashioned way of gaining employment, is coming back. With jobs as plentiful as they are today,

skills may be able to trump education for certain applications, provided the basic job requirements are met.

REMEMBER CLEP!

For those who are studying for a degree, or hope to study for a degree, remember that you can test out of many courses through CLEP. With CLEP, you can study and then test out of 35 college courses...and there are opportunities to test out of your entire freshman year for free. You can study now, and build skills!, and then test out of courses and let employers know you keep the information fresh and available. You could take the CLEP test for a language, for instance, and devote yourself to becoming fairly knowledgeable! This is a very valuable skill to many employers.

BACHELOR OF BEING

Students in Europe are now able to attain a 'bachelor of being' with studies that include: Life and career orientation Personal development, resilience, biography and beliefs, communication and conflict resolution, current social challenges and responsibility. Perhaps the Fair Shake Free School could one day certify learners for "Freedom Potential Factors" to crush the concept of 'risk factors'. (Long-time readers: remember when we talked about this? My commitment has only strengthened ~ ;) We could include studies in Autonomy, Caring, Building Capabilities, Embodied Cognition (mind-body thinking), Curiosity, Cooperation and more!

VALUE OF SCHOOL

If the Dept of Education were to ask us for our opinion about what should be taught in America's schools (and they should ask us), what would you tell them? I'd like to hear your thoughts! If you'll think about this for a while, maybe even talk about it with others...and then jot down the top three things you would like to see schools offer to the youth today, I will tally the responses and send them out in the next newsletter. Please start a new email to me with EDUCATION in the subject line to share your thoughts.

PELL GRANTS EXPANDING:

(This is lifted and heavily edited from a newspaper article)

Incarcerated folks in 42 states and Washington, D.C., can now get federal grants to work with colleges and universities to earn trade certifications, associate's degrees and even bachelor's degrees. Federal Pell Grants will bring the number of participating colleges and universities up to 200. Pell Grants are awarded to college students on the basis of need and, unlike loans, do not have to be repaid. The maximum award for Pell Grants for all college students is \$6,495 for the 2021-2022 award year.

That Second Chance Pell grants are now growing under President Joe Biden is a remarkable turnaround, considering that in 1994 it was Biden's signature crime bill that blocked prisoners from getting Pell Grants in the first place.

Not everyone is happy, however. Since COVID, many of the education opportunities have shifted to tablets. Ashland University, a Christian college in Ohio, in particular, has drawn scrutiny for offering courses almost exclusively on tablets, raising questions about the quality of its instruction. It has become one of the biggest providers of courses under Second Chance Pell, with operations in 13 states, according to the Marshall Project.

FAIR SHAKE SOFTWARE UPDATE

I'm sending a grateful shout-out to the folks at The Community for their support to get a real and current version of the Fair Shake software in WI institutions. As they had mentioned in their recent newsletter, the version being run in the WI-DOC is 6 years old and does not even run on the computers properly. That's because it is not my software (they 'scraped' the website, vs using what I've developed). I've asked the RACHEL folks several times to update the software. The information you see is not only old, much of it is simply not true. What else on that server is also grossly out-of-date? This is a reminder to do your own research and question all information sources.

A new version of the software will be released later this month. The Fair Shake software was approved for use throughout the BOP in 2016 and there is a page on the BOP website where staff can find out more: https://www.bop.gov/resources/news/20160303_access_to_reentry.jsp I would be happy to send a copy of the letter, too!

A lot of prisons around the country have been contacting me lately to receive the new version!

FREE SCHOOL STARTING IN THE OWNERSHIP MANUAL!

I'll offer a document from the Ownership Manual in each issue. This month I'd like to share Crap Detecting document. If you'd like a copy, please start a new message to me with BS DETECTING in the subject line, and I'll sent it!

BOOK REVIEW: CALLING BULLSHIT

Are you tired of seeing and hearing bullshit? Me, too! This is so urgent and important that I created a page on the Fair Shake website to help folks spot, question, and call-out bullshit. (<https://www.fairshake.net/bs-detecting/>) Professors - and professional BS-spotters - Jevin West and Carl T. Bergstrom have created a college course (which we can access online for free) which was so successful, and so badly needed, that they have also written a book to help us all spot bullshit, call bullshit, and avoid becoming the victim of bullshit.

They highlight four main areas in their book, although there are many other forms of bullshit. The tools below are often used in conjunction with 'data' and 'facts', but they are really contortions of information created to tell a story to try to convince you of a specific perspective.

Visualization: Spotting misleading axes. Data graphics tell stories. Fairly subtle choices on the part of their creators can influence the stories they tell, sometimes in misleading fashion.

How do you know a paper is legit? Any scientific paper can be wrong, but you greatly decrease the chances of being misled if you know how to distinguish legitimate articles from untrustworthy ones.

Visualization: Proportional ink. Many data graphics, including bar charts and pie charts, use the sizes of shaded areas to represent data values. The authors describe what they call the *principle of proportional ink*: in such charts, the amount of ink used to represent a value should be directly proportional the value itself. Unfortunately, this principle is commonly violated.

Which face is real? Recent developments in artificial intelligence have made it possible to rapidly generate photorealistic images of people who don't even exist. While these are indistinguishable from real faces at a glance, you can learn to tell the difference with just a bit of practice.

QUOTES:

“Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.”
– Malcolm X

“Change is the end result of all true learning.” – Leo Buscaglia

“The more that you read, the more things you will know, the more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”– Dr. Seuss

"I can't change what I've done, but I can change in what I become!" Timothy Campbell

"I'm not afraid of the storm. I am the storm." – author unknown

Wishing everyone a terrific year of learning!

To our successful transitions.

Ubuntu! ~ sue

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Remember these resources can be found in your phone-gizmo: 2-1-1 AuntBertha.com
Fairshake.net HelpYourselfTherapy.com

You can share the Fair shake newsletter with folks who have access to the internet here:
www.fairshake.net/fair-shake-newsletter.