

## **UVA's Castleman, Doleac Launch Interactive New Program to Reduce Recidivism**

Program aims to engage incarcerated individuals with communities, opportunities for success after incarceration

Charlottesville, Va. (UVA) - Two University of Virginia professors, in partnership with the Chicago-based education technology firm, Edovo, are launching an innovative program that will develop, implement, and evaluate a tablet-based re-entry module to strengthen inmates' transition back into society upon completion of their sentences.

The program and randomized evaluation, led by Ben Castleman, assistant professor of education and public policy at the Curry School of Education, and Jennifer Doleac, assistant professor of public policy and economics at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, will be supported by combined gifts totaling \$573,000 from the Charles Koch Foundation and J-PAL North America (based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

The project ultimately aims to reduce recidivism by engaging incarcerated individuals in the months leading up to their release, and the fragile and uncertain months after their release, to help facilitate a successful integration back into society.

"Two-thirds of released inmates will be re-arrested within three years," Doleac said. "This high recidivism rate signals our collective failure to help formerly incarcerated individuals build stable lives after prison. By leveraging interactive technologies and behavioral insights, we can provide prisoners with more personalized information and supports during this often-challenging transition, and reduce the probability of recidivism."

Castleman and Doleac will pilot this intervention in two county jails, and in subsequent years, plan to expand the intervention to additional facilities across the country. The individuals participating in the study will be able to create a personalized transition plan that is customized and adapts to their areas of concern, and post-release will be provided with ongoing information, to maintain stability and fulfill their personalized plan.

"We have seen this approach work in other contexts, particularly in postsecondary education, where we've leveraged personalized text messaging to help students receive and maintain financial aid," Castleman said.

Currently, there is little rigorous evidence on how to improve re-entry outcomes for incarcerated individuals.

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### **About the Koch Foundation**

Founded in 1980, the Charles Koch Foundation supports hundreds of universities and other non-profit organizations across the country exploring the institutions that foster societal well-being. Through its giving, the Foundation aims to advance an understanding of how free

societies improve the well-being of people around the world through educational initiatives in economics, philosophy, entrepreneurship, criminal justice, and other disciplines that have a direct impact on opportunities to thrive.

### **About J-PAL North America**

J-PAL North America is a regional office of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), a research center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that seeks to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific research. J-PAL North America works to improve social programs by running randomized controlled trials, disseminating policy lessons, and building the evaluation capacity of governments and non-profits.

### **About the Curry School of Education**

The University of Virginia's Curry School of Education located in Charlottesville, Va., is ranked among the nation's top 25 graduate schools of education. To its 2,300 undergraduate, graduate and professional students, the school offers nationally-ranked degree programs in education and health centered around human development. Through 3 research centers, nearly 20 labs, and dozens of individual projects, faculty and students at Curry conduct rigorous, practical research that supports both the quality of teaching, learning and clinical practices and the decision making of district, state and national leaders.

### **About the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy**

The University of Virginia's Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy was founded in 2007 with a mission of developing leaders and generating new knowledge to solve the world's toughest public policy challenges. Batten is currently home to 26 faculty, 156 undergraduate students, and 164 Master of Public Policy students. Its interdisciplinary research faculty include leading scholars in economics, political science, and social psychology. Batten graduates go on to careers in the private, public, and government sectors with a focus on improving their local and global communities.

### **About Edovo**

Edovo is an education technology social enterprise founded to provide meaningful access to education and self-improvement tools that can unlock the potential of every person affected by incarceration. The approach includes daily access to educational, vocational, and cognitive-behavioral therapy programming tailored to inmates' needs and interests. Ruggedized Edovo tablets host content curated by our content and learning design team, as well as materials adapted from expert partners in diverse learning areas. Along with nationwide network of correctional facility partners, Edovo is poised to improve the outcomes of tens of thousands of incarcerated people and their families throughout the United States.