1. **Space Weather Monitors Program** *(jointly funded by HMI, NSF/CISM and NASA/SOHO/MDI)*

   We are finally shipping! We received 60 SID monitors from our production facility in early July. Unfortunately, the workmanship left us with many problems, most of which have been corrected. We were able to start shipping SIDs for the IHY in early August. In addition to the 100 from last year, we now have 15 more in the field. 30 more are being saved for distribution at the IHY conference in Ethiopia in November. We’ll be giving a 2-hour workshop to attendees, mostly university professors in Africa, on how to use and incorporate the monitors into classrooms.

   I just talked with Marty Quinn, a consultant in data sonification who is working with the THEMIS team. I had asked him if he might be able to provide us with a tool to sonify our SID data, primarily to make it accessible to blind students. He has looked at our data site and thinks the tool should be straight-forward. He's putting together a little proposal that we can consider. I also have contacts at U of Puerto Rico for producing many of the rest of our materials in Braille and putting together a package suitable for the blind.

2. **Summer Students** *(jointly funded by NSF/CISM and NASA/SOHO/MDI)*

   Undergrad Shannon Lee has been involved with the Prison University Project this summer, a program to provide math and science tutoring to San Quentin inmates. When Shannon described her experiences to me, I was enthralled and asked her to generate a description I might send out. She did, and her report is attached. Hope you enjoy reading about the outstanding work this young woman does!

3. ** Presentations**

   On 10 August John Beck gave a presentation at the Montalvo Art Center as part of their Starry Starry Night event. It was entitled "The 3D Sun" and showed images from the STEREO mission. John encouraged Q&A from the audience rather than droning on and on). Approximately 100 people of all ages attended – the demographic of the audience was one that NASA has neglected to target: the very rich…
Participation in the Prison University Project

A report by Shannon Lee, Stanford Solar Center
August 2007

See also http://www.prisonuniversityproject.org/about_us.html

About the Prison:
San Quentin State Prison was built by inmates and completed in 1852. It is California’s oldest prison (including Alcatraz which was a military prison in 1861 and a Federal Prison in 1934). San Quentin holds approximately 6,000 male inmates of which 600 are on death row. This makes the San Quentin death row the most populous in the country. It houses the only execution facility in the state: formerly a gas chamber but now a lethal injection facility. Aside from the condemned residents, the rest of the population is made up of level 1 and level 2 inmates (level 4 being the highest and most dangerous classification).

About the program: (Taken from the website www.prisonuniversityproject.org)
The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 barred all prisoners in the U.S. from receiving Pell Grants. Until that time, this need-based federal grant program had been the primary source of funding for prison higher education programs throughout the country. Virtually overnight, all but a handful of such programs shut down for lack of funds. By 1996 fewer than ten such programs existed - down from a high of 350 in the late 1980's. The college program at San Quentin was started in 1996 in the wake of this disaster. With a few volunteer instructors, donated textbooks, and no budget whatsoever, a professor from UC Davis, administrators from then-Patten College, and education staff at San Quentin, created a plan for a small college program at the prison. They started with two classes.

Patten University at San Quentin conducts three 13-week semesters per year, with approximately 12 classes each semester in the humanities, social sciences, math, and science. Students who complete the entire 60 unit curriculum can earn an Associate of Arts degree in liberal arts. Each student must hold a GED or high school diploma to enroll and be part of the general prison population. To date, 60 students have completed their degrees while at San Quentin and many more are now continuing their studies on the outside.

The Program also provides a comprehensive College Preparatory Program in math and English, which prepares beginning students to do college level work.

The After Prison Advising Program (a project of the California Reentry Program) provides pre-release academic advising for students who plan to continue their studies after leaving prison.
Most of the roughly 70 instructors, teaching assistants, guest lecturers and tutors who participate in the program in a given semester are graduate students or faculty from the University of California at Berkeley, San Francisco State University, Stanford University, and other local colleges and universities. All work on a voluntary basis.

The cost of all program materials and supplies, as well as the salaries of the Program Director (Jody Lewen) and Program Administrator (Jennifer Scaife) are paid through funds raised independently by the Prison University Project from individual donors and foundations.

**My experience:**

To put it simply, I feel education is a right for every human being on this planet. It opens up avenues for all people of all races, economic standing and cultural background. Knowledge is power; it gives you a hold on your future and a path to make better choices. I think that inmates have as much of a right to an education as anyone else. Just think, if just one of those inmates gets an education is paroled and decides to go on to college instead of turning back to crime then we have all won. Every member of society has benefited and no one has lost anything.

When I tell people that I tutor basic math at San Quentin the first thing I get from them is surprise, the next is usually the question “why?” The answer I can give most readily is because many of these prisoners are going to be paroled and giving them an education and treating them like individuals is essential if we want to help them to rejoin society and become productive members of the community. But deep down the answer is much more complex. First of all, some of the students of the program are serving life without parole. So why educate them? One reason is that these “lifers” tend to serve as role models and mentors for younger and newly incarcerated inmates. So by attending college classes instead of sitting around and being angry and doing homework instead of fighting out in the yard, these lifers try and show that just because you’re in prison now doesn’t mean that you can’t save your future. I also feel that education is necessary for all people from all walks of life. It builds self worth, discovery, empathy, and connects us all together. Worldly knowledge and understanding can keep us together as human and prevent us from separating into us and them; thinking in terms of us and them breed’s apathy and even violence.

My first day tutoring was a bit nerve racking. I kept reading my volunteer handbook searching for something I may have missed. The rules for volunteering in a prison are quite extensive (as you would imagine) and I was very worried that I would make a mistake like wearing the wrong thing or forgetting my I.D or behaving in a manor that someone would determine was “unprofessional”. Also the handbook repeatedly stated that the prison had a “no hostage rule,” I was definitely aware that this was not your typical tutoring gig. We arrived at the prison in groups and we have to go through two separate gate/checkpoint areas. The entrance to the prison looks like a medieval castle complete with barred gates. Once you enter the prison proper there is a courtyard that faces an old condemned hospital, to the left of you is a more modern looking building...
which is called the Adjustment Center. I asked about this building one day and the answer I was given was unsettling. The Adjustment Center houses the “worst of the worst” of the death row inmates (about 100 of the 600 condemned). These men are deemed too dangerous to even be allowed contact with other condemned inmates. Thankfully, our program is only open to inmates who are a part of the general population. I don’t think I could handle teaching some of the notorious death row inhabitants.

To get to the education buildings we have to walk through the prison yard. There are a baseball diamond and a large field as well as benches and basketball courts. Inmates in blue walk around and socialize. One man was sitting on the steps softly playing the trumpet while a group was feeding a flock of Canadian geese that like to hang out in the field every day. As our group walked by there were smiles and greetings from the men. Some teachers would pause to say “hello” and “how are you” to a student they recognized from the program. It was an eye opening thing to see genuine courtesy and friendly conduct from men that I expected to be more surly or distrustful. It was the first of many events that showed me that my expectations were totally wrong and based on ignorance and stereotypes.

The building that the math classes are held in is hardly fit for classrooms, but it is all they can give us and we are grateful for it. I think it is an old converted laundry facility but I could be mistaken. There are 4 classrooms inside, one is held in an old supply cage and only seats a few students at a time. The class I tutor is basic math; it has about 20-30 students in it at one time and therefore is in the largest room. As we prepared the materials needed for the day the students on the program checklist are let out of their cell blocks to come to class. As they filed in to the room they stopped by the front desk to pick up their folders and sign in. Since I was new the other teachers thought it was a good idea for me to hand out the folders and start learning peoples names. Many of the students smiled and some asked my name and shook my hand. Again I was struck by how polite and respectful these men were, some even called me ma’am! After they picked up their folders and took a seat at their desks the other tutors start to walk around and see how everyone is doing.

The class is self paced so the students study the text book on their own and do practice problems (homework) until they feel comfortable enough to take the quiz for that section. The quizzes are pass/fail and they can take different versions of the section quiz until they get a 100%, then they are allowed to move on the next section. As tutors we are there to help them with the practice problems, explain concepts, answer any questions they have, and grade their quizzes.

After I had handed out the folders to the students who could come to class that day I timidly stood behind the desk waiting for…something. I was a little shy about walking around to see if anyone needed help. All the other tutors knew the students well and thus had developed a rapport with them. I worried that the students wouldn’t take me seriously or would be distrustful since I was new. Wrong again! A student raised his hand for help, I looked around and everyone else was busy. Here I go! I shook his hand and introduced myself hoping that I hadn’t already done that when he picked up his folder (I was really
going to have to speed up on remembering everyone). He returned the gesture and said he needed help with percents. I looked at his work and he was on the right track, he just had two values in his formula reversed. We went through some more problems to make sure he got it and then he thanked me politely and went back to his work. After that I lost all my timidity and began to walk up and down the rows of desks to see if anyone needed help. After a while I could tell by their body language the students who may have needed help but were too shy or embarrassed to ask. One pleasant surprise was how motivated and driven the students were. They really wanted to know the material down cold and would spend the time and do the work necessary to achieve their goals. They had inquiring minds and they were happy to ask you questions and soak up any knowledge you could give them besides the information in the book. After you explained a problem a common question was “now what if the problem was like this instead, how I could solve it?” These men were not here just to take a vacation from their cells, they were here to learn! A teacher could not ask for more perfect students: enthusiastic, disciplined, curious, driven and grateful.

Another surprising realization for me was that even though I was in direct contact with inmates at a state prison I felt very safe. There is always an armed guard in view (just outside the room) and you are never alone with any of the students. The program volunteers always travel in groups with a member who has a special permit to be on the yard without an escort. But it’s the behavior of the students that was the most reassuring factor. They are calm, quiet, and appreciative and they adhere to the professional code of conduct that we are also required to follow.

As the time for class was running out each student handed in his folder and made his way out of the education building and back to a place that I would never see. Nearly all of them thanked us for coming and some even shook my hand again. On my last day of tutoring before the two week semester break, one of the men asked if I was coming back. I told him “Of course I am,” and he replied “that’s real good, you coming here is a great thing. You have a great attitude, thank you so much.” How often can a teacher or tutor say they have received that response? I know I never said that to any of my teachers, but I think I will start.

Now that we are in the middle of the break between semesters, I really miss my Friday nights tutoring at San Quentin. It is such an incredible feeling to know that you are making a difference. Some of these men never got an adequate education as children and are seeing the material for the first time. It’s like giving them a gift that is long overdue. You wonder if their lives would have been different if they were given more educational opportunities early on. Tutoring at San Quentin isn’t easy; just getting through the security alone can be taxing some days. The prison is a harsh place with harsh realities. There are times when you feel like you are tutoring a regular community college class, but then there are times when half the class is missing due to an entire cell block being locked down and you know that you are not in Kansas anymore. The program has a ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ policy with the students. We don’t pry into their lives; we don’t ask what they did or what their sentence is. It helps to build trust and respect, and also helps us from being prejudiced or biased. But like the project director Jody Lewen says “if you have a
problem teaching people who have committed murder, don’t teach in a prison.” It’s a fact; many of these men have committed terrible crimes. But the reality is that the vast majority of them will be paroled to rejoin society. So “why educate prisoners?” you ask. Because it gives them opportunities they never had, it gives them a chance to make better choices, and it gives them self esteem and shows them that someone out there thinks that they can give life a second chance and when that second chance comes along it gives them the tools they will need to succeed.

Disclaimer: This is just my view and experience with the prison university project. I am not authorized to represent the project in any formal manor.