



## **Final Recommendations**

### **Black Undergraduate Student Life Sub Committee**

#### **Drexel's Anti-Racism Task Force**

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## **Contextualization of the Text**

This committee exists to find solutions to improve the student experience for marginalized, particularly Black and Brown, communities at Drexel. Our goal is to enhance Drexel from all angles: from Education, including faculty, staff and curriculum; to housing; to relations with OED; to student spaces and more. We aim to drive Drexel to support its students holistically, enhance community relations, eliminate barriers and foster transparency between students and the institution, and maintain needed physical space for Drexel's Black communities.

Drexel University, as a historically predominantly white institution, has operated since its founding under the mantle of systemic racism and white supremacy. BIPOC and other marginalized members of the Drexel community face fundamental inequities in almost all areas. Therefore, Drexel must commit to reimagining its policies, procedures and culture; we must be proactive and forge our own path in the name of equity and justice for all members of the community.

Though we have compartmentalized some issues we have identified that undergraduate students here face, it is to be understood that they are all related to one another. These problems coexist in influence each other and as such must all be dealt with to the best of Drexel's ability. The limitations and precedents of other organizations and universities should be mere considerations, not impediments in the face of progress in our community. Drexel must strive to be at the forefront of change, equality and diversity rather than simply a follower of modicum efforts.

## **Implement University Wide Anti-Bias and Anti-Racist Training**

**Recommendation:** Long before the racial eruption of 2020 Drexel has dealt with a race issue and those issues are directed toward people of color. We must start the process from day one or even from moment zero (before people even inhabit the campus) through education. Like the other Drexel safety initiatives like the Active Shooter modules that are mandatory so should these. We are suggesting an early and continuous approach to these trainings not just for requested parties. These trainings should be mandatory for Every University 101 and Civic 101 course.

As we continue to roll out more trainings, we are also requesting that the university modules be revamped and updated yearly. Drexel highlights and stands on the back of our co-op program and because of this we must request mandatory anti-bias and anti-racist training for all companies we partner with. In 2020 the College of Engineering held a student only panel for the entire school where it was revealed by everyone who spoke that bias and discrimination is normal for each of them during their co-op cycles. If we continue to use co-op as a shining example of the great things Drexel produces, we must make sure that they are living up to the same ideals we are instilling on campus. Finally, there should be co-op evaluations for all students after their cycle is complete in collaboration with the IDEA committee through Steinbright.

## Investing and Uplifting Black Student Organizations

**Recommendation:** Historically, our Black recognized student organizations have been under funded. Without access to a certain tier of money the growth and development of these organizations can easily be stunted. SAFAC is the student lead organization that decides how every recognized student organization will be funded each year. We need them to be willing to reevaluate their process to make it more equitable for the students who consistently hit the glass ceiling of the allocation process.

The second leg of this race is creating a partnership with Institutional Advancement for donation purposes that would create a pot specifically for our student organizations of color. Finally, to increase the balance of said pot we are requesting that a percentage of the institution's endowment be dedicated to this initiative as well as collections from departments and colleges around the university. We are taking a full pronged focus with this request because our moral compass is directed by our money and if each leg of the university from student funding to endowment has skin in the game the greater the prospect of awareness.

## **Improve Counseling Services and Increase of Staff in Important Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Offices**

**Recommendation:** How can we really connect with the various communities we are attempting to serve if our students do not see people who look like them or who have had similar life experiences? We are proposing a wide scope approach to hiring for The Counseling Center and other departments that focus on DEI. Eventually this will be spread to each college as well because during this process of creating these recommendations it was brought to our attention on multiple occasions that the lack of visible diversity among our professors directly impacts our student's ability to relate and learn.

We have to not only offer the Counseling Center some support with increased staff, but that staff needs to feature more diversity than it currently does. We are requesting diversity on a wholistic level; race, LGBTQIA+, gender among the focuses. Through the various complaints we have uncovered we have come to realize that the lack of representation and support is prevalent throughout the entire university. Often our DEI offices are supported by one professional staff member. Leading to overextending and gaps developing in our systems as well as to a slowed approach to actual change and resolutions.

## Student Financial Assistance

### **Recommendation:** Expand student financial aid assistance and opportunities for employment

It is no secret that students struggle with the financial burden of attending Drexel University, and that this burden is a very distinct obstacle for people of color in our community. It is imperative that Drexel provide financial avenues of support for students who are in need, and to make those avenues widely known. Students having to stress about their finances while getting through college or being made to feel that they were not adequately supported, leads to distrust and unenrollment. Although it was an unprecedented emergency, the covid-19 pandemic sheds some light on the need of many students. 11,205 students were eligible for financial assistance through the CARES Act, and it is important to note that ineligibility wasn't necessarily determined by financial need. Online students, International, PhD and DACA students could not be included. Of the 11,205 students, 47% received the funds ([Final CARES Act report](#)). This number could be restricted due to the limited allocation of funds to the university or to students failing to fill out the application. While some of the need was a direct product of the pandemic, it also exacerbated many students' already existing problems.

One possibility could be expanding the [Student Emergency Fund](#). Currently, it is a one-time fund with a cap of \$1000, with awards apparently averaging under \$500. While significant, depending on the emergency facing the student, this would not be enough. Also, the fund states that it cannot be used for recurring expense such as rent. Recurring expenses many times are what students are in need of assistance with. Recurring expenses such as rent and medication can be the difference between a students' life and otherwise. One time funds and grants aren't always sufficient. The emergency fund can be expanded and evaluated based on application, and supplemented with other initiatives.

Other funds and grants to help students in need can be made available, possibly with Alumni funding or partnering with outside organizations and funds. Another way to help the issue is expanding student employment. A lot of students come with an understanding of the existence of work study, and a lot of students don't. First and foremost, the information needs to be clear. Only work study is mentioned on the [Drexel Central financial aid](#) page. It's understandable since Drexel Central only handles work study, which is government aid, but being that this is a student's first and possibly only point of contact for financial assistance, it should at least mention the existence of other options. Both [work study](#) and [student workers](#) are overviewed on Drexel's human resources site. However, the difference between the two, from a student eligibility perspective, is not made clear. This site is giving the information from the perspective of the employer. This can be very confusing for students that are often left out of these initiatives such as international students or students under DACA. More clarity is certainly needed, then the real work of improving and building up the infrastructure for student workers can be done. Creating and opening up more positions, particularly for student workers, is important. There's also the possibility of Drexel partnering with neighboring/community organizations in a program similar to coop to help students find work study/student worker like positions while they attend the university.

## Alumni Relations

**Recommendation:** Personalize alumni relations and cross alumni and current student events

Alumni relations begins with current students, undergraduate and graduate. Students are only willing to come back, donate, and continue to be a part of the community if they truly enjoyed their experiences while attending or see worthwhile efforts happening. Our Black students and other marginalized students have overall stressful and complicated experiences during their time attending the university, which is why their retention and alumni presence numbers are understandably lower. Those that do come back often do because of a feeling of obligation and duty to their communities rather than a feeling of want or pride.

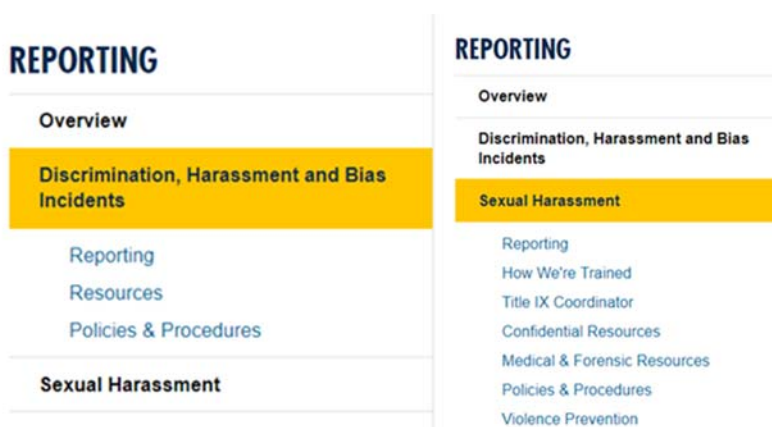
Solving alumni relations in the future is hugely dependent on solving all the issues for current students that are being evaluated by the task force. However, there are some ways that alumni involvement initiatives can be improved. Adapting more events and activities to be not just inclusive of current students and alumni members, but purposefully and specifically planned to engage both groups is very important. Examples of where to put these types of events are Homecoming and Alumni weekend.

Some cool initiatives could be an alumni talk series similar to Ted X talks or guest lectures. Also having mentorships and sponsorships to connect current students and alumni. Instead of trying long term mentorship programs, which often fall short, having mentorship/networking events or conferences would be more successful. New initiatives should be planned and advertised holistically across the university, with the Office of Alumni Relations making sure to connect with different departments, offices and student organizations to collaborate.

## Reporting Policies and Procedures

**Recommendation:** Improve written policy, distribute more resources to handling Bias incidents, give equal severity to bias incidents and consequences

Members of Drexel's Black community and other marginalized communities have very little faith in the Office of Equality and Diversity and the system of reporting bias and discriminatory incidents. There is already concern with how the school handles sexual assault reports and investigations, so students have even less trust when it comes to the university handling discrimination, bias and racism with the thoroughness and severity it deserves. Building that trust back starts with showing students that the university holds both crimes to the same severity and importance, which is not currently the case. Shown below are the page tabs on the [OED website](#) for Discrimination, Harassment and Bias incidents and for Sexual Harassment, respectively.



The difference tells students that Sexual Harassment is taken more seriously and is given more resources than incidents of bias, discrimination and racism. Under Discrimination, Harassment and Bias Incidents it is not said how personnel are trained to deal with such incidents, there is no specific coordinator or point of contact and there are no clear prevention measures. When you click on either link to give a report the result is even more worrisome. The writing on the [sexual harassment reporting site](#) is itself strictly conventional and rigid, and only makes the writing for the [discrimination reporting site](#) even more cold and sterile.

### REPORTING TO THE UNIVERSITY

The University encourages any individual who has been affected by sexual harassment or misconduct to immediately report the incident(s) giving rise to such concerns.

The University will respond promptly and equitably to all reports of sexual harassment or misconduct and will take appropriate steps to eliminate any harassment or misconduct, prevent its recurrence and address its effects. The University, as part of its response, will provide support and resources to students, faculty and professional staff to address concerns related to sexual harassment and misconduct.

Any student, employee, applicant for employment or admission to the University, or campus guest who believes that they have been discriminated against on the basis of sex, in violation of Title IX or the University's [Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy](#), may make a report to the Title IX Coordinator.

### SUBMIT AN OED REPORT

The OED incident reporting form is OED's preferred and primary method for receiving reports. Using this form ensures that OED has the information necessary to make informed decisions concerning report response and the health and safety of impacted individuals and our Drexel Community. However, if for some reason you are unable to submit the report using reporting form above, please contact OED by phone or email to relay your report or to gather additional information about reporting.

Further proving this is in the actual policies for both incidents. Sexual harassment and assault, as well as sex and gender-based discrimination, ([OED-3](#)) is given a zero-tolerance policy. This is very clear. However, the severity other identity-based discrimination ([OED-1](#)) is watered down with contradictory statements going on about the freedom of speech, as seen below.



diverse and global environment. Drexel considers acts of discrimination, harassment, and bias to be unacceptable and counter to its core mission and values. At the same time, freedom of expression and the right to disagree are fundamental to the educational experience and culture of our University. Nothing in this policy should be regarded as suppressing such intellectual freedom so long as any disagreements, arguments and/or debates are conducted in an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect.

Drexel University is committed to promoting tolerance in all forms, including tolerating the speech of those who disagree with the position of another individual, group or authority and expects such disagreement to be expressed in a manner that is respectful and tolerant. The University

This kind of language leaves a very dangerous grey area that those who uphold bias, discriminatory and racist ideals may hide behind in the name of intellectual freedom and freedom of speech. While we may have freedom of speech, it should not equate to freedom from consequences, and Drexel University needs to be steadfast in its own values and policies against discrimination.

These policies need to be critically read and rewritten, and more resources and staff need to be put towards Discrimination, Harassment and Bias incidents. Procedure and preventative measures also need to be looked at. Many students that do report are not checked up on, their cases are not adequately investigated, or their claims are not dealt with for whatever reason. The procedures for what happen after filing a report need to be made clear, as specifically as possible considering issues of confidentiality. And whatever issues lead to inconclusive investigations need to be dealt with.

## **Establishment of an Africana Studies Department**

**Recommendation:** The creation of an Africana Studies Department offering major and minor degrees

Drexel University has had significant difficulties maintaining a stable program of Africana Studies for a long time. Many Black students interviewed by this task force subcommittee have lamented the lack of support given to this area of scholarship during their time at the university. Thus, the creation of a full Department of Africana Studies within the College of Arts and Sciences to become an academic center of Black cultural scholarship was a priority request of the students interviewed. For this aim to be achieved it will be necessary to create a university-level committee to construct the framework and oversee the formation of a Department of Africana Studies offering major and minor degrees to undergraduate and graduate students.

## Investment and Support of Steinbright IDEA committee

**Recommendation:** The creation of a more inclusive experience for underrepresented students in the Steinbright career services and Co-op program through investment and support of the IDEA committee.

One of the hallmark experiences of Drexel University students is cooperative education that provides real world professional employment opportunities to Drexel students as they completed their course of study. Co-op has notably become an integral and desired part of the Drexel education experience as originally envisioned by the founder Anthony J. Drexel. Thus, it is dismaying to learn that many underrepresented students do not feel that they are getting the full measure of the co-op experience. From the counseling to the hiring opportunities, underrepresented students report that their outcomes seem to be less than that of their majority counterparts. The Steinbright IDEA committee was formed to engage these particular issues and to propose ways to mitigate the racial biases in the Steinbright system. This recommendation serves to support the IDEA effort.

## **Procurement of Endowment for DEI initiatives and programs**

**Recommendation:** The creation of an endowment to provide funding for Drexel University DEI initiatives and programs.

The Anti-Racism Task Force has identified many circumstances that negatively impact underrepresented Drexel students. It has also identified that these circumstances exist primarily because there is little effort and few resources to change them. Some of these circumstances hinder students' opportunities for promotion to employment after completing Drexel, and others prevent students from completing their degrees entirely. It is believed that a funding source, an endowment, that will provide financial assistance to underrepresented students through DEI initiatives and programs will translate into more successful graduates of Drexel University.