

# Strategic Plan ARTF Podcast

**Ahaji:** Hello, I'm Ahaji Schreffler. I'm the senior director of education abroad and the office of global engagement. And today I'm joining you in my role as DEI liaison for the Drexel 2030 strategic plan process.

I also served as one of the two co-administrators for the anti-racism task force. And I'm the president of our black colleagues, recent. I am delighted to be joined today by Kim Gholston, our chief diversity officer and Jason Schupbach, Dean of the Westphal College of Media Arts & Design. Thank you so much for joining me.

**Kim:** So glad to be here. Thank you, Ahaji.

**Jason:** here. I'm thrilled to be here.

**Ahaji:** So here we are. It's black history month, 2022, and I'm recalling, you know, just two years ago, February of 2020, when we were celebrating black history month, we were all on campus.

We were having lots of connections and celebrations. And here we are two years later and a lot has happened in the past two years, with respect to the anti-racism task force and the work that was led by Kim Gholston and the other co-chairs as well as the strategic planning process. And so just kind of setting that as the, as the backdrop of our conversation today.

Looking back to the past two years and thinking about how we situate ourselves in the present and looking forward to the future, I'm wondering if you could maybe share some context about what it actually means to be an anti-racist university?

**Kim:** Sure. So before I, before I do that, I just want to be able to spend a minute talking about the task force and the opportunity for us to bring together people who are willing to lend their voices, their perspectives, and themselves to the work that really produced a report that we shared in September of 2021, that really demonstrated the need for us to consider being an anti-racist university.

And that was pulled from a number of students, faculty and staff who shared their experiences. At Drexel the opportunity for us to look at data, to see where there was under-representation, in many areas, that did not include people of

color. And as a part of that, we committed ourselves to becoming an anti-racist university, an anti-racist university, people often say, well, what does it mean?

What does anti-racism mean? And what it means is for Drexel to be able to become a place of belonging for people of color, where you have the opportunity, same opportunities to grow, to learn, to educate, where you are, are free of discrimination. And harassment, because of the color of your skin.

And because of that, anti-racist university doesn't happen overnight. It's an ongoing commitment. It's an ongoing journey. Will we ever fully get there? I don't know that answer, but I think every day, if we commit ourselves to it for calling out actions that impede people from progressing here at this university, that it not only supports our black and brown colleagues, but everyone who at any point in time feels marginalized at the university.

**Jason:** Yeah. I love this idea of commitment. I've been doing a lot of this work. I was previously in government and in the foundation world and we worked with an organization when I was at one of my jobs called Race Forward. And they brought up this idea of an equity frame and it's a commitment that you make in every decision to look at, am I holding up inequities? Am I being racist? Am I doing something that's going to make someone feel like they don't belong in every single policy decision? And it's sitting at your desk and being committed in every decision and asking yourself, is this going to harm someone in some way?

And it really does take that level of commitment to actually see change. And if you sort of put yourself in that seat on every single day, especially if you're sitting as a leader, like the privileged seat I sit at, and as a Dean, I have to ask myself that about every single decision. And so it, that concept of the equity frame, the frame of mind, I guess, is what I would say.

I feel like it's really important to doing this work well, and it's something I really get excited about being able to sort of take a stand around and sitting in a Dean's chair and saying like, actually I'm not going to do that because that's not right and because it would harm someone in some way or maybe harm is not the right word, but that it would, it would create an inequitable process or make someone feel like they don't belong.

So I think that word commitment is so important and I'm so glad you said it because it takes individual commitment. It takes institutional commitment.

**Ahaji:** And that's a great point. So I'm curious what your thoughts are, you know, there've been many people across our community that question, that commitment, or may be impatient to see, how that commitment is actually showing up across our campus.

So maybe you could provide some insight as to what does it actually look like? What does it mean to form an anti-racism task force and come up with recommendations that span so many aspects of our community and then what happens next? How does that come to life through the work that's being done or that will be done in the future.

**Kim:** So we started with the well over 200 recommendations that came out of the anti-racism task force subcommittees. And so for, for us, it was breaking out into 11 major areas of the university to span all populations in the university to say, what are some areas that are broken or what are some areas in the university, by which it doesn't allow for that equity lens to be placed?

And because of that, there may have been some disparate impact to certain groups. And we specifically looked at our data around our black and brown colleagues as a focus after George Floyd's murder and then moving into more of a movement that spans into our strategic plan and our culture of equity imperative.

But what that means is we've committed to over 60 areas to say, we're going to take a hard look at what we're doing, so that as a university, we can come together and create action plans to either enhance, move away from, or start doing exactly what Jason has just talked about: committing to equity and ensuring that we're the best place we can be for our students, for our faculty and our staff.

And so this is where it starts, I think those over 100 people that supported the anti-racism task force work because they gave us a gift, a free gift. And so with, that gift, you know, we opened it up. And so now what are we going to do with it? And that's really putting ourselves and, and really committing to progress on our commitments to figure out how as a university we can move forward.

**Jason:** Yeah. I mean, I know you spoke a little bit about there being some pushback, and I think that everybody kind of individually goes on a journey around this work. I know myself as a white man, a white presenting man, I am a gay man. I don't like to play the trauma Olympics. So like, what's your ism and is it worse than mine?

I mean, that's like so lame, but I, I sort of think about it as like the wizard of Oz. That's my favorite metaphor about this work is like, you know, if the Emerald City is the place of belonging we all want to get to, that's like, will get us home.

You know, there many people on their individual journey of this work and there are many places along that journey for individual people. So maybe not everybody remembers the wizard of Oz, as well as I do. You know, like, you know, you might be in the poppy field, there, there are people like partying in Emerald City here already who were impatient and what this happened yesterday.

And I mean, same, same basic story. And you might be the tins woods man. You know, you might've just put on the ruby slippers, my favorite part, or it might be a sunny day in black and white in Kansas. And, but actually the thing to say to ourselves is it's all okay.

It's all a great movie. It's okay for it to be a sunny day in Kansas and for you to be struggling with even the term anti-racism, but you don't get to not watch the movie. Right. Right. You have to start on the journey, but all of us as leaders need to understand that everybody's okay. If you're anywhere on that journey and you had to let people find their way, t's our responsibility to start them, but it has to be for the people that are frustrated that it's at the people that it's a sunny day in Kansas and vice-versa right. You know, the people in Kansas are frustrated. The Emerald City people have got to say that's okay, but we're going to collectively work on this and that will take all 60 of those things to do it.

It will take training. It will take literally changing the humans in the room by hiring more diverse faculty. All of those really big things and I mean, this is generational work, right? I mean, I remember one time I was really distraught about some of this work. I remember one time I had a freind stop me and said, Jason, you're not going to solve racism.

It's like, like ever, it's going to exist in the world. You know, it is your job to help people with the journey. And so, you know, I feel very blessed, like you said, by that some people gave us the gift of this report and did that hard work and stood up unpaid to do all that extra work right. And labor, which they did not have to do.

And to at least give us the guideposts and the basis. To turn on the movie, right? Yeah.

**Kim:** And then I think, you know, to kind of piggyback off of that, a lot of what was pulled out of the report, and that will align with the work of the strategic plan are fundamental breaks that we've had at the university that people identified the issue and said, this is really hard and walked away from it because it's really hard.

I think when we look at it this way and really dig into some of those hard things, it makes a difference for the entire university. Again, we say, you know, anti-racism and yes, we have a specific desire to, to ensure that we have equity or people of color as well, because historically they have been the marginalized group and the underrepresented groups and they still continue to be at Drexel.

So we have work to do, but a lot of the things that were identified in this report and why they fit so nicely with a lot of the work we're doing with the strategic plan is because these had been ongoing major things that we just need to tackle as a university.

**Ahaji:** Absolutely. Yeah. I was a student here in the mid to late nineties, I'm dating myself, but, as I was looking through some of the recommendations, I, I could identify areas that have been challenges for as long as I was a student and definitely predate me.

So, Jason, to your point, this is generational and it's not going to happen overnight. Drexel's in a, in a predominantly, at least historically black neighborhood in a historically black city, so the charge for us as an institution is even that much more important as we think about our social location.

So we've touched on a little bit of the barriers and some of those certainly are internal barriers, Jason, as you mentioned, so I'm curious if maybe we can expand a little bit on that, in terms of turning those commitments into actions and gaining trust and gaining trust from those who may not feel belonging, gaining trust from those who may not yet understand the importance of this work and doing some repair as well.

So if we think about the inner work, the institutional work, the communal work and the barriers that may be along the path of us becoming an anti-racist institution, are there any thoughts that you would offer to the community in terms of how do we get through some of these barriers? How do we repair?

How do we do the inner work? That's very, very challenging for many of us and at the same time as looking outside in our direct circles of influence and beyond to pushing this moment into the movement.

**Jason:** I mean, I think one sort of layer I'll add on to that is on top of the, you know, generational trauma that's happened around some, some of these issues.

We're all very traumatized by the last two years of just the, you know, living day to day through all this BS. And so, you know, just it's been hard. And so I think you're, you're working with folks who are, I don't want to use the word fragile, but burned out and traumatized. So I actually think a lot of our work really does need to recognize who we are as humans right now, and have a very human approach to it, give people the space, to have the uncomfortable conversations in ways that they can enter the room in a safe way and not feel forced, because there's just no extra room in some people right now to do some of those things like, but, you know, we can't, but at the same time trying to hold people accountable to actually doing the hard work. I mean, it's, it's a fine line to walk right now because people are so just absolutely exhausted, you know? So I think a lot about that, like on top of all the traumas that have led to, and then the huge traumatic event or George Floyd's murder, where people's head spaces are right now and how to do this work carefully so we actually get something done and it doesn't just feel like another thing that they have to do is, is it really is a big challenge for us, for our society right now. Right. There's just so much going on. So I think that you, you get some small, early wins and successes, you show how that worked. You know, it's like you, you prototype something and I'm a designer can you tell? You prototype something, you make mistakes, you try again, and you kind of, you know, move forward. And just like, it is small, careful work, but it is also holding people accountable.

Like we've dedicated these 60 things. What's the short-term progress? What's the medium term progress? And what's the long-term goal? And how do we measure our success so that people who are partying in the Emerald City (I'm going to kill this metaphor, sorry!) aren't sitting there going, they haven't made any progress, but we can actually say yes we have. And here's how you could measure it. I mean, you know, I can give examples of how we've already made some progress in the Westphal College. I don't want to be like humblebraggy, but, that's, you know, I think that's how you do the work, but I, I just, I keep thinking about every day, every day I get up as a Dean and I say, what can I take off people's plate?

Because they are so tired right now, you know? And, you know, and put this on because they need to have the space for this, you know? And so that's what I think the challenge is going to be.

**Kim:** And I think Jason nailed it with the conversations, right? So are we talking about it because it's not going away?

Some people may have thought this was a check-the-box exercise. So that moment in time where everyone was saying it's a racial reckoning across the nation. This hasn't stopped, this hasn't stopped. And, you know it starts with senior leadership and the commitment from President Fry down on continuing that conversation.

So, you know, senior leadership is now reading a book called The Conversation. We're talking about , what is racism? What is the problem? And, and really started digging into why should we care about it? And how much do we care about it, right? Because if we care about it, then that's a part of the work that we do.

Just like we care about research, you know, we care about enrollment numbers. If we're saying we care, you know, again, I'm going to keep, I'm going to kill this word commitment. Then that's, that's where it is. It's time, it's resources funding, for the things that we need to be able to move this work forward.

And it's education. And it's, it's giving some grace to it as well.

**Jason:** Hmm, absolutely. That's the right word I was looking for was grace. Yeah. Yeah.

**Kim:** Yeah. So people are, you know, they are hearing often now I feel silenced. I don't feel like, you know, in a meeting or in a conversation that I can really voice my opinion or ask the question because it's not politically correct.

It's not kind of where we're going as an organization. And I'm saying, ask the question, make your statements, let's talk about it. And there's a way that we can have civil discourse around, you know, the things that people don't understand. We still may agree to disagree, but it's important as a part of this, that we don't switch lanes so those that felt they were driving fine with their license. And now we've stripped that from them because we want to give power of voice to another group. That's not what this is about. It's not, it's not a movement to give to one and take away from another, it's move over because there's enough space at the table for all of us.

**Jason:** I love that you said civil discourse because I think that's so important. That's the magic of doing this work in academia, is academia is set up to take on these hard issues. Right.

If we can't take it on, who in the heck is going to take this stuff on in society? And so like, it's okay for us to struggle and argue. I mean, that is what is yeah.

And the mess up and make that is what is supposed to happen in academia. It is the purpose of academia. It is the pleasure of being in academia.

And so I, again, it's okay to be anywhere on the journey, you know, (the tornado did come by the way, but. I will stop, I promise), but like, I just, you know, I, I, that's why I have a lot of faith that we can do this and we will get it right. And it's going to be messy. The mess is the point, you know, and sometimes it'll feel like a hamster wheel, but that hamster wheel is actually slowly moving down the road.

You know what I mean? If someone's pushing, we're nudging on the outside of it, right. That poor hamster in the middle, all of us. But, I just totally agree, but I have a lot of faith that since we have such dedication from our leaders and, and by the way, can we just talk about our students, they are in the Emerald City?

You know what I mean? Like they were there yesterday and they, the pressure I got, like the moment I started from the students to be like, what are you going to do? I mean, they're just holding me accountable. They're amazing. Right. They already get it. And so, I mean, I had to have data and exactly what I was doing and I couldn't like in two weeks for them, there was yes, you know, as soon as I started, they're just the Drexel students, just such an incredible student.

**Ahaji:** Actually, I'm glad that you mentioned students because this type of work, certainly takes all, all hands on deck, right? Students, staff, faculty, every person is a stakeholder in this and in our community.

So as you think about the question for all of us really is like, what do we do as individuals, as students, as staff, as faculty? How can we support this work? How can we further this movement? There are these commitments from the anti-racism task force, there's this strategic plan process happening, how at the individual level can people get involved and support this?

So curious what your thoughts are on that.

**Kim:** I mean, one is just being open, open to change, right? People say, well, Drexel has been okay, but if Drexel doesn't continue to, to move and to grow and to shift, then we become old news and that's not where I believe Drexel wants to be.

I think it's, it's being open to change, open to new ideas, open to new ways of thinking, being okay with the move away from the status quo. So I think that's, that's important. It's educating ourselves, you know, in groups, individually



reading something you haven't read before listening to a different perspective, listening to our whole podcast, whatever it is to just say when that made sense or, you know what it didn't.

You know, doing a little bit of research, it's getting involved. A lot of the academic and administrative units have created diversity, equity and inclusion committees get involved. Even if you have a different opinion about this work, standing on the sidelines, doesn't get us anywhere.

It's so true. So, you know, involving yourself, you know, as a, as a part of this I think is, is really important. And that begins to build, and you said this earlier trust, right? Trust and, you know, the fact that we, that we're really truly committed. And so I think that's a huge piece of it, how we begin to build trust with each other, trust in areas that are supposed to support our students and our faculty, trust in those that are educating us and who have been put in positions to lead.

So people say, you know, walk the walk, talk the talk and all that. It's true. It's true. This isn't about, you know, because it's a part of our values now, because it's a part that I'm just kind of being a mouthpiece to this. It requires more than that.

**Ahaji:** And accountability is so important, right? Holding ourselves accountable for being comfortable or getting comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Right? Because if this were comfortable, we wouldn't be, we wouldn't be here to begin with, if this were comfortable work like Kim, you were mentioning before a lot of these issues have not only grown, but really compounded upon themselves over generations. And so it's, it's very uncomfortable. And so getting comfortable with being in that uncomfortable space is, is a great starting point.

I'm also curious, maybe you could expand a little bit on the, some of the successes, right? We need to celebrate along the way, and we're not going to do everything tomorrow or yesterday. And it's really important for us to take stock and inventory and what's happening and make sure that people are aware of the good work that is happening and all the people who are putting time and energy in now to, to fording this work.

So, if either of you could offer...

**Jason:** I mean, it's kinda, yeah, it's kind of awesome. We're sitting in our music industry space recording that, which is the number two program in the country

at Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design. you know, that had an entire white faculty. They had no one to really teach hip hop, the most successful music in the world, that's been around for 40 years.

Right. They were using adjuncts, there were no full-time faculty, excuse me, I don't want to misspeak for the program. And they were just very clear that they needed experts in that and that they needed to diversify their faculty. And so we actually were able to coordinate with the College of Arts and Sciences because they were hiring in African studies.

So we did a cluster hire, so we're sort of, between our music department, our music industry department, and with their department, and we hired a ton of new faculty. We ended up hiring three amazing African-American male faculty, Tony Dofat is an expert in. Produced Queen Latifa and Sean Combs. James McKinney is an expert at really innovative and interesting guy, he is an expert in go-go music from Washington DC and Brent White who is a jazz musician and is doing, going to be doing a lot of work with the Dornsife Center in the community, building out music stuff there.

And then just sort of, you know, when you change the face you bring in the new knowledge, it just, it was so meaningful to us. It was one of the first things my students in music industry said to me is there's no black professor. Right. You know and we were able to fix it and we did it in partnership and we did it intentionally. The talent is out there. It was not a problem to find the talent. And it just is making a difference, the small things make a really big difference. And so I see that as a really big success for our faculty. Everyone's really excited about it.

**Ahaji:** Well, and that's a huge win because it doesn't, it's not just about the black students and the black faculty right? It's the, about the biggest business in the biggest part of our industry. Everyone is missing out by not having access to that expertise.

**Jason:** Yeah. And so we're really, they were just so excited they're here, you know, I think that's the kind of thing you'll see more of that we want to bring in people from all different backgrounds into our programs to make sure that, that it's, it's not just about being a great research about something it's the lived experience that matters.

Right. And that, to me matters just as much in some of these situations, like, have you literally walked in the shoes and actually done that work, especially in our fields, that creative fields, it's like, we want people who have been out there

doing it, it makes business sense. It makes cultural sense, it makes all those things. So I see that as a success. We've been doing a ton of training in the college. I really want to give credit and credit to our performing arts department that's been bringing in trainers to really do some of that really hard work. There's uncomfortable conversations.

I mean, I think that uncomfortable is another key word here, along with commitment. Like if you feel comfortable, you're not doing the work and that's okay. You know, it's okay to step outside your space and be a little uncomfortable again, that's the magic of academia. You know, I can't tell you how many times a week someone pushes me on something and I go, wow, I really should have thought of that, that way, if you're have all the anxieties, I have you beat yourself up all night about it, but then you come in the next day and say they were really right. I really do need to change the way I think about this, and so we're doing the trainings, we're hiring folks, we're kind of, we're going to be hiring an associate Dean, like many of the colleges of DEI to help us do this work.

Also we have this bridge program that we've copied from, Lebow College and others, also one at the College of Arts and Sciences, which is really about supporting first-generation and students of color to help them graduate. If you just look at the facts, just in the Westphal College, the facts, students of color, and first-generation students have a 10% less chance of graduating from our college.

It's just, it is a fact, right? And so we just started this two years ago and it is to create a community of support to get them over that finish line. I mean, I don't know if you know this, but the number one determinant of economic success in this country continues to be getting a bachelor's degree, beginning and end of story.

If we're talking about generational wealth, growth and equity in our society for any race, it's getting them over that finish line. And so the bridge program is run by our associate director of our advising office, Denise Snow, and she's doing a great job building that community there.

My parents were all first-generation college students. I mean, we're like farmers from Missoura. We say Missoura not, Missouri, so I feel really passionate that this support system exists and we've been trying to raise a ton of money for it. And Lebow has given a great model of it.

LeBow's has been around for a long time and is very successful. So there, you got to celebrate those wins and be so grateful that they're really happening, , and, celebrate the dedicated people that are making them happen.

**Ahaji:** Well, and you raised a great point as well because recruitment is one part of the equation and increasing the diversity of our, of our students, making sure that they're able to graduate, maybe making sure that they're feeling a sense of belonging and support is actually much more important. So the things that you're speaking of really are a key part of that. And so, and I know there's other successes and small wins and things as well, OED has been so busy, so maybe you can talk about what's happening in that space.

**Kim:** So there's so many things happening and, you know, I will say this helps, and we just need to do a better job with communicating, you know, I think we all get so caught up in doing it that we kind of forget that there's still people looking and saying nothing's happening.

And there's so many things that are happening and, you know, clearly the Center for Black Culture is up and running.

**Jason:** It's become a hub. Yeah.

**Kim:** Yeah. It's a really big deal. And now that you know, the campus is open., we're still wearing masks, but they're in there and it, and, and it's made such a difference, with that commitment.

Going back to training, we, back in November, we were booked until April with the requests for training. And so, you know, working with our DEI partners across the university, which are the associate deans for DEI, in other major areas that support DEI efforts, like we're, we're really figuring out, you know, how to utilize our resources the best way are you doing training?

Was that training? Can we collaborate? How does that work? So I think we're coming together and using Office of Equality and Diversity more as a hub for work that was very decentralized two years ago. And so I think there's just a different sense of energy around everyone supports or is in network, which has really made a difference in our recruitment practices.

We're doing training we're out there on inclusive hiring practices, talking with search committees. And so seeing such a commitment from that perspective and ensuring that we're bringing the most qualified, diverse candidates to this campus. People are reaching out, ensuring that that's happening is great.

They're involving OED in some of those recruitments, we just been working with engineering, they're doing a cluster hire and involved in that, we have major grants that have come through, and my first advanced grant, major, dollars for, for NIH funding and looking at post-doctoral fellows.

So just really doing a lot of work in that regard.

The Ubuntu Center, a part of the School of Public Health, a huge grant in that area and doing some wonderful, wonderful work with Dr. Sharelle Barber. So it's, it's just so many initiatives that have cropped up programming support. And then we go back to some basic things. We committed to another, I believe three years of test optional with the SAT scores to just really see, you know, how that's able to impact positively those students of color and others who have struggled with, with test taking, but would still be able to thrive at Drexel university.

So just, you know, taking those opportunities to really, we've seen a more diverse student body over this past year, which is really, really exciting. So just some real exciting initiatives going on. And the support that's been given, not just through the Office of Equality and Diversity, but throughout the university, in various areas has been, has been exciting.

**Jason:** Yeah. I mean, one thing I left off, which really deserves a lot of credit, is there a lot of faculty and staff really dedicated to this on a micro level? So you could take any one of my programs, they flipped up their entire speaking programs and inviting more speakers of color, only speakers of color for the year.

I got give credit to my like film and TV, peeps, they jumped and immediately started looking at, okay, what movies are we showing? They started doing a film series. I mean this and the students really saw it and knew it and could see that they were talking about changing the curriculum, that, that hard work that is their job of what happens in the classroom.

I would say the vast majority of the faculty at Drexel are very dedicated to this and trying and get it. And they're not getting held up as heroes, right? They're not even going to the meetings, they're not sticking up their hand, but in that classroom, they're changing what they taught and they're making sure that they're enriching it in ways.

So there are a lot of silent heroes right now on this that I just kind of want to celebrate. And I mean, I see, they don't know that I see them, but I have a

student council. They talk to me about, yeah. I mean, they talked to my student council talks to me about it and go, wow, they really did change it, but like, it's, it's so much better, I love when students, to me to say, I can see they're really trying. I know it's not their expertise. Right. They've spent their life studying X thing that is about X piece of kind of culture. That is not necessarily that, but I can see them really trying to make a difference.

And, I mean, shout out to our elder faculty who have taught, you know, our next deep expert in one thing, and now we're being asked, hey, you got to bring in all this other knowledge that you've never really studied and that are actually trying in that quiet way. I mean, that really matters because that's where our main interaction is with the student.

And I just, I see so many of them quietly trying, and it's nice to see that. I mean, they obviously, everyone's got work to do.

**Kim:** Back to the faculty is our teaching and learning center and the inclusive pedagogy training that they're providing that many faculty have gone through and have given rave reviews about it.

So it's continuing that sort of thing. That faculty aren't getting paid extra to take these, these classes, but they want to know what, I don't know what I don't understand. How can I be better? How can I better serve my students? So I totally agree with Jason, that quietly people are really doing the work right quietly, you know, people are raising their hands or, or, or emailing her saying this doesn't feel right. I don't know, but could you, I'm thinking that maybe this could have been addressed differently? Maybe we could have displayed this differently? People are starting to just open up to think a little differently and to take into account things that before didn't really impact their day to day and, and, and why would it have?

And so we often say like, well, how could this have going on? Why, why wouldn't it, if there weren't diverse opinions, diverse ideas, diverse eyes looking at a situation that all's right with the world. And so now people are really saying this isn't quite right, this isn't okay. So I appreciate that and I appreciate those voices of people who may not necessarily before have thought that any of this matter, because it was status quo, right.

**Ahaji:** It's reminded me too. Again, as you mentioned before, we're still in a pandemic and there's been so many layers of change for all of us and as an institution, as, as individuals, as human beings and thinking about the strategic

plan as well and how Drexel is re-imagining itself and looking towards the future.

And all of the things that we're describing are essential for our survival as an institution. And not only survival, but our, our thrive, our thrival. Is that a word?

**Jason:** It is now? Like a snake letter, if you're a nineties kids!

**Ahaji:** Being open to new ideas to change, to re thinking how we've done things in the past.

So just expanding. I mean, there's, there's so many things happening as, as has been shared and what's coming to my mind as well as back to the accountability piece. And I know that OED has been working on a framework in, in partnership with all of the DEI stakeholders across the university and with, within the structure of the strategic plan of how can we actually track and measure, where we were, where we are, where we're going and the progress that we're making.

And so I'm just curious if you have any, anything to share on that and in terms of what that might look like and, how we will be tracking progress forward, including where we were and where we are now?

**Kim:** Yes. Actually in the month of February, we will be holding some training.

We'll look at what our tracker mechanism is. Talk through sort of, you know, what are people doing? What have you decided as a part of those commitments that you're going to look at as an academic unit, administrative unit or department, and determine, you know, what resources are needed, as well as how you will begin to measure, you know, that activity, to ensure that we are holding ourselves accountable to some metrics and that we have some goals that are set up for, you know, for the academic units, as well as for the university.

So, that will be something that we'll use where you'll see all of the commitments currently laid out. But that will add the substance of what we're actually doing. And so in this year, people will see more of is, is sort of gathering that data and what those activities are, and then setting those baseline metrics so that we can begin to measure year after year, to hopefully, see things move in a positive way.

But that is a, it's a huge undertaking. I'm happy to say that some units got ahead of us as a central hub to say, we've already started so Westphal, you know, their forms all completed. They're done. So basically this is a waste of his time..

**Jason:** but no, no, no, it's not me. It's the people say amazing people at work for me.

**Kim:** Yeah. But there are, there are some colleges that, even before George Floyd's murder had already invested in diversity, equity and inclusion and the importance of it. And so, as we created the anti-racism task force, they sort of just moved along with us. And sometimes went ahead of us, which has been amazing.

So now it's really our opportunity to pull in all of that information as we align ourselves to the work and be able to really tell a really wonderful story of how, how Drexel has moved along in their journey to become an anti-racist university. And ultimately our goal would be that we will be a premier university, that really reflects DEI and B, which is the belonging, in an amazing way.

**Ahaji:** I know that there was a climate survey that many members of our community participated in. And that the results haven't been made available yet, and that those are forthcoming, but maybe you could just share some insight into the meaning and the significance of that climate survey as it relates to our discussion today.

**Kim:** I want to just thank everyone who participated in the survey. This was our first climate survey. It will not be our last, we will at least be doing it every two years, if not more, it was some poll surveys.

But it's going to be an opportunity for us to really see where we need to develop as an organization where, are some of those areas of opportunity for us to build trust with our students, faculty, and staff, where more resources may be needed, where more education may be needed and to celebrate some things that were actually doing well. So, more to come on the survey over the next month, we will be analyzing the data and providing a report out to the community so that we can hold ourselves to where we were back at the end of 2021 and where we're going as an organization. And I think that will align nicely with the work of the anti-racism task force and the commitments that are outlined in the report.

**Ahaji:** So let's, let's talk for a minute about the strategic plan because we do have this very robust process that's underway right now, and many individuals



who were involved in that work and one of the imperatives is the Culture of Equity. So maybe Jason, you could share some thoughts about how the work of the anti-racism task force is going to be supported and aligned to the strategic plan.

**Jason:** Well, I'm really glad you asked that, Ahaji, you know, you and I sit on the CORE implementation team for the implementation task force. And as we were starting that up, there were so many different things that were going on right at that moment in Drexel, that that anti-racism task force was completing its report that, EPC had completed the Drexel plan.

There were all these other elements going on that we tried to all tie together into the implementation plan and to really make sure that all of that hard work that had happened goes into the implementation of the Drexel 2030 plan. And so, as we were talking about, well, how this work is important across everything, right?

So how are we going to do that? Kind of in two different ways. There's, there's every single team and I believe there's 11 teams that are working on key issues towards our future. These initiative teams have a representative who it's their job to be paying attention to DEI issues in that team. So like, like, as we said, it's that commitment, right?

Like that person is committed to thinking about that and all those conversations, those people will roll up into an imperative team, the Culture of Equity imperative team. I know it's a little confusing initiative, team imperative, you know, cultural equity team that will really be where the conversation happens, around how is this going, you know, across so many different things.

At the same time, there are offices that are outside of the strategic planning teams that are going to be implementing some of those 60 things we've promised to. Right? So there's like multiple levels it's getting implemented, but we're making sure as part of the strategic planning process, that those are very open lines of communication that as things develop from other offices, it's all, it's all, you know, kind of being coordinated and people are in the right rooms talking to each other about what the progress is.

So we have regular progress check-ins you know, some of that's just getting rolling and going and cause we wanted to get the initiative teams that people kind of doing the hard work on the ground, right. The space to kind of get going. And so there'll be a lot more about that.

There's going to be regular, regular, monthly updates coming out from the 2030 plan. And that will include obviously updates from the Culture of Equity team too. If you have more questions about how that's gonna work, you can go on to the implementation of the strategic plan website and its kind of is all laid out how that works.

**Ahaji:** That's great. And you know, I I'd like to also name that often, from the outside looking in a lot of structures and, and committees and people can appear to the community as though it's, it's slowing down progress. And so really just to underscore, the work of the anti-racism task force and the work of OED and all of the DEI stakeholders across campus is really going to be supported by the strategic planning process that it's not intended to slow down or to pause the work that's happening.

It's really meant to uplift and best integrate in any way that we can.

So where can people go to stay updated and informed on all the work that's being done and also understand how they can participate and, and in what ways they can get involved?

**Kim:** So the anti-racism task force website is somewhere where you'll be able to go, at least at this point to look at the commitments of the university. I would encourage you to read the report, as well as the upcoming strategic plan to see long term where we're going.

But in terms of activities, check our website, check with your DEI officers that are located within your academic units, or get involved with your DEI committees that are located throughout the university and the different areas, as well as our Academy of Natural Sciences. So, plenty of opportunity.

And if you're still off, please feel free, email me, or anyone else that, you know, in the Office of Equality and Diversity. And, we'll make sure that we're able to connect you either through us or getting involved with one of your colleague resource groups.

**Ahaji:** Actually, I'm glad that you mentioned that because we haven't talked about the colleague resource groups and I wanted to give a quick shout out to our new newly named colleague resource group which was the black faculty and professional staff association.

We've just as of this week, we've rebranded ourselves as the Black Employees at Drexel, BEAD for short. And when I think of belonging and community and

connected, just sharing that these organizations are for all of us, that belonging, isn't just for those who may identify as a black individual student, faculty, or staff, it's really for all of us to belong and participate and support each other and community.

So, so just wanted to share that as well that supporting our colleagues is a way of fostering belonging.

**Jason:** That's great. Yeah. And it just, individually in Westphal, we have a DEI, we call it the DEIC, the Diversity Equity Inclusion Committee, which I didn't mention before. That is a great place to kind of get updates about where we're going as a college.

They've done a ton of great work over the last year, and that's been all again, time that people have dedicated outside of their jobs to the college, which we're really grateful for.

**Ahaji:** Well, this has been a wonderful conversation. It's really the beginning, right? This is the first of more conversations to come.

I know we'll have a continued discussion in the future and I just want to thank Kim and Jason so much for, for sharing and being open and authentic with us today and looking forward to the next discussion.