



**Executive Director  
The Environmental Collaboratory  
Drexel University**

## **BACKGROUND**

The world is facing an environmental emergency. From climate change to environmental degradation, the challenges confronting humanity and the planet are growing rapidly and becoming ever more complex in cause and inequitable in impact. The problems are ‘wicked’ and there is no single technofix waiting to be discovered – rather there are many, each requiring diverse contributions not only from multiple academic disciplines but also impacted communities working together towards a shared goal.

However, we cannot recognize the environmental problems created by humanity, nor develop solutions to address them, without also facing and changing the beliefs and values that have led to them. In short, we must not only create new interdisciplinary knowledge, but we must also shape societal attitudes while doing so. The former is the role of a world-class research university. The latter is the role of a world-class museum. Drexel University is exceptional in offering both and is committed to marshalling each in service of a healthier, more equitable and sustainable planet through the creation of a new type of interdisciplinary sustainability institute – The Environmental Collaboratory.

Drexel University invites nominations and applications for the inaugural position of Executive Director of The Environmental Collaboratory.

## **ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL COLLABORATORY**

With expertise in environmental science, engineering, law, health, policy, and humanities – as well as a deep and common commitment to civic engagement – Drexel University (Drexel) and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University (The Academy) together possess the resources needed to work with communities, corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies to both identify regional environmental

issues and address them impactfully, equitably, and together. The aim of The Environmental Collaboratory (The Collaboratory) is to make that happen.

More than a place or a narrow theme, The Collaboratory is a groundbreaking *approach* that unites Drexel, the Academy, and communities of need in a shared endeavor to sustain our planet and mitigate its degradation. From the Latin *collaborare* – to work together – The Collaboratory will leverage the extensive human capital of both Drexel and the Academy in ways that effect meaningful, measurable, and scalable impact. Bringing faculty, staff, students, partners, and the public together, The Collaboratory will coordinate, develop, integrate, and resource research, education, civic engagement, and public programming to solve problems and shape culture. In doing so it will also **drive and catalyze curricular innovation** – a crucial measure of The Collaboratory’s success. It will achieve these outcomes by focusing on three key pillars:

- **Community Based Research** – The Collaboratory will initiate, facilitate, and promote interdisciplinary, community-based research that creates novel solutions to real-world environmental problems. The Collaboratory views community-based research as being the ways in which faculty, staff, and students collaborate with external groups in mutually beneficial partnerships that are grounded in scholarship and consistent with Drexel’s and the Academy’s roles and missions.
- **Civic Engagement** – The Collaboratory will identify research questions in reciprocal partnerships with communities; engage communities in the research process; devise, incubate and deliver implementation strategies with communities; share outcomes with a wider audience; shape beliefs and values through public programs and campaigns; and erode the power dynamic that commonly characterizes the relationship between ‘academia’ and ‘community’.
- **Seed Funding** – The Collaboratory will catalyze research and programs through seed grants. Proof-of-concept projects will be an early focus for The Collaboratory. From its earliest days, funding will need to be cultivated and solicited through private philanthropy, industry partnerships, and government grants.

The Collaboratory concept has been carefully and transparently developed over 18 months through open consultation with a broad array of faculty and staff across the Academy and each of Drexel’s schools and colleges. It has excited everybody who has participated in that process and enjoys the full support of all of Drexel’s deans.

Advancing The Collaboratory is central to Drexel’s Strategic Plan, about which Drexel’s President, John Fry, has stated that “the ‘big idea’ is that we need to take everything that we do well and connect it so that it has maximum impact, so that the whole is much larger than the sum of its parts . . . . For the University, this means working differently going forward in a much more holistic way.” The Collaboratory embodies that vision.

For the Academy's part, its strategic plan of 2019 commits it to "informing and building a movement of environmentally engaged communities for a healthy, sustainable and equitable planet" and nurturing research which supports that intention. Again, establishing The Collaboratory is central to the success of that process.

But the value of The Collaboratory must extend far beyond the confines of these respective documents. Rather it must offer meaningful benefits to an array of constituencies if it is to be successful. For example:

- For the environment – Complex issues addressed by multi-disciplinary research
- For communities – Stakes in problem definition, research, and implementation
- For justice – Focus on communities of greatest need
- For science – Increased transparency through inclusive participation
- For faculty – Interdisciplinary, solutions-focused and community-based research opportunities and a platform for driving curricular innovation
- For students – Grassroots engagement opportunities
- For funders – A delivery partner for all things environment
- For the Academy – Collaboration, content, community, and cultural change, as well as diversified streams of sponsored and contributed income

The Collaboratory will also support Drexel's commitment to sustainability. Over the course of the last year, a multidisciplinary team of professionals, including faculty, administrators, and staff representing research, community partnerships, operations, and academics have been working, with full administrative support, to embed a nascent Office of Climate and Sustainability at Drexel. With the conceptualization and planning for The Collaboratory as a backdrop, this group designed and launched a multidimensional, year-long programmatic effort called [Climate Year 2021](#) with five key goals focused on: strengthening our climate commitment, promoting experiential learning opportunities, inspiring climate-focused research, expanding community engagement through public-facing programming, and enhancing efforts at inventorying and tracking climate-related activities at all levels of the University. This effort will serve as a launching point for the Executive Director to utilize the campus as a living environmental laboratory to engage in not only project-based work, but also experiential learning, community-based research, and regional academic convening.

Drexel and the Academy believe that The Collaboratory will be a unique institute arriving at a crucial time for the respective institutions, the city, and the planet. They believe the need for an interdisciplinary, co-generative, solutions-focused research and civic engagement platform is significant and growing. They believe that the institutions together have the resources to make The Collaboratory successful. They do not believe it will be easy – but recognize that innovation rarely is.

In short, Drexel and the Academy believe that The Collaboratory could be extraordinary – but it will need an extraordinary person to lead it.

## ABOUT DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Drexel fulfills its founder's vision of preparing each new generation of students for productive professional and civic lives while also focusing its collective expertise on solving society's greatest problems. Drexel is an academically comprehensive and globally engaged urban research university, dedicated to advancing knowledge and society and to providing every student with a valuable, rigorous, experiential, technology-infused education, enriched by the nation's premier cooperative education program.

Drexel is a comprehensive global research university with a unique model of experiential learning that combines academic rigor with one of the nation's premier cooperative education programs. It has built its global reputation on core achievements that include:

- Leadership in experiential learning through Drexel Co-op
- A history of academic technology firsts
- Recognition as a model of best practices in translational, use-inspired research

Founded in Philadelphia in 1891, Drexel now engages with students and communities around the world via:

- Three Philadelphia campuses and other regional sites
- International research partnerships including China and Israel
- Drexel Online, one of the oldest and most successful providers of online degree programs
- The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, the nation's oldest natural science museum

Drexel is one of Philadelphia's top ten private employers, and a major engine for economic development in the region. It is committed to being the nation's most civically engaged university, with community partnerships integrated into every aspect of service and academics.

Drexel's Schools and Colleges at the undergraduate and graduate level include: [Arts & Sciences](#), [Biomedical Engineering](#), [Science & Health Systems](#), [Lebow College of Business](#), [College of Computing & Informatics](#), [Education](#), [Engineering](#), [School of Entrepreneurship](#), [Honors College \(custom-designed majors\)](#), [Media Arts & Design](#), [Nursing/Health Professions](#), [Professional Studies](#), [Public Health](#), [Law](#), and [Medicine](#). Drexel engages in a cooperative learning model. Founded in 1919, Drexel's cooperative education program was one of the first of its kind, and it continues to be among America's largest and most renowned.

Drexel Co-op provides professional employment experiences for students, giving them the opportunity to test-drive a career before they enter the workforce. The benefits are obvious: during their time at Drexel, students can participate in up to three different co-ops, which equals 18 months of professional work. A Drexel Co-op experience connects them with industry leaders and brings their cooperative education experiences back into the classroom. Because of this, Drexel students graduate having already built a professional network and are positioned to lead the workforce of tomorrow.

Drexel's ongoing strategic plan, "Drexel 2030 – Designing the Future," guides the University's 21st-century trajectory. Learn more at the [Strategic Plan website](#).

## ABOUT THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia was founded in 1812 for "the encouragement and cultivation of the sciences." Since then, it has sponsored expeditions, conducted seminal systematics research, and established a peerless natural history library and archive. Among the 18 million specimens in its world-class collections are shells gathered by Ernest Shackleton, fishes hooked by Ernest Hemingway, birds caught by John James Audubon, and plants picked by Meriwether Lewis. It has offered public education for more than two centuries; been home to America's greatest naturalists; debuted the world's first articulated dinosaur; created one of the country's earliest environmental consulting units; and transformed global understanding of freshwater ecology. In short, the Academy has been a pioneer of earth and environmental sciences for almost as long as the United States has existed.

In 2011, the Academy's storied mission was supercharged through its affiliation with Drexel. The University invested in the Academy's science enterprise, and in return the two institutions created the Department of Biodiversity, Earth and Environmental Sciences. Today the institutions' faculty-curators continue to widen the world's understanding of biodiversity through collections-based teaching and research. The Academy's Patrick Center for Environmental Research leads a collaborative initiative to conserve and restore the streams that supply drinking water to 15 million Americans. Its team of educators devise and deliver nationally recognized programs that build science literacy among disadvantaged communities.

As the Academy enters its third century it does so as an irreplaceable repository of biological specimens, a powerful driver of vital new knowledge, and a proven agent of inclusive STEM provision. It does so as an institution that can trace its impact from the tributaries of the Delaware to the icefields of the Antarctic. And it does so with an engrained appetite for innovation, a demonstrable commitment to social justice, and the burning desire and untapped potential to do much more for a planet that needs it now more than ever.

## KEY LEADERSHIP

### **Paul Jensen, PhD, Drexel Provost**

The Collaboratory's Executive Director reports to Drexel's Provost, Dr. Paul Jensen. Dr. Jensen was previously Dean and R. John Chapel, Jr., Dean's Chair of the LeBow College of Business, a post he assumed in April 2018. Early in his tenure, Jensen developed and won support for a new strategic plan that leverages faculty research strengths and strong industry relationships. The plan marked a transitional moment for the College, heightening the focus on developing interdisciplinary, market-driven curricula to better prepare students for success in the rapidly changing economy.

As Dean, Jensen also led two of the College's most successful fundraising years and launched what is now the Drexel Solutions Institute – a University-level initiative that builds on Drexel's rich history of industry partnerships. The Institute serves as the primary gateway for organizations to connect with the University's student and faculty talent, intellectual expertise, and R1 research capabilities – empowering organizations with full-scale, measurable solutions while expanding interdisciplinary research and experiential learning opportunities across the University.

Jensen has had a broad impact on academic programs across the University, leading two other academic units. At the Goodwin College of Professional Studies, he led the creation of Drexel's First-Year Exploratory Studies Program, which allows students to explore their academic options before declaring a major. Joining the Drexel economics faculty in 1997, Jensen brought research expertise in the areas of international trade and industrial organization, with a specific focus on the determinants of bilateral trade patterns and the welfare implications of various trade and industrial policies. He has been recognized for his teaching with awards from both Drexel and Pennsylvania State University.

Prior to his academic career, Jensen worked as an engineer in the power generation division of General Electric. He received undergraduate degrees in economics and mechanical engineering from Syracuse University and holds a doctorate in economics from Pennsylvania State University.

#### **Scott Cooper, President/CEO of the Academy of Natural Sciences**

The Collaboratory's Executive Director will establish and maintain a close working relationship with the Academy's President and CEO, Dr. Scott Cooper. An international museum professional and heritage preservation scholar, Dr. Cooper has spent over two decades protecting, promoting, and transforming cultural sites and institutions in countries around the world.

Cooper studied engineering at the University of Manchester and architectural conservation at Edinburgh College of Art. He was awarded a UNESCO scholarship to study stone conservation in Venice and subsequently returned to Edinburgh to complete his doctoral research on Scottish history.

As the founding Director of Museums at the Qatar Foundation in Doha, Qatar, Cooper oversaw a \$65 million capital project to create four ground-breaking heritage house museums. Amongst these was the critically acclaimed Bin Jelmoed House, the first museum in the Islamic world to be dedicated to the subject of slavery.

After Qatar, Cooper spent four years as the Vice President of Collections, Knowledge and Engagement at the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, Canada. There he devised and implemented innovative learning, visitor experience, exhibitions, research, and First Peoples' collections strategies that together helped transform the institution into Canada's most popular museum.

Cooper joined the Academy in 2018, bringing fresh direction and a determination to reimagine the role of a university museum in a majority-minority city by expanding its impact and creating an accountable, accessible, and sustainable institution of significant value to Drexel and the diverse communities it serves.

In so doing, Cooper has directed the Academy toward “informing and building a movement of environmentally engaged communities for a healthy, sustainable and equitable planet”.

## THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### Opportunities and Challenges

**Plan and implement a visionary strategy** – After more than two years of research and planning, The Collaboratory is poised to bring aboard its inaugural Executive Director (ED) to define its immediate and long-term strategic priorities and identify actionable means for achieving sustainability, excellence, and influence. The ED will be a key thought partner with Drexel and Academy stakeholders and community leaders in this process. She/he/they will develop The Collaboratory’s strategic plan with transparency, clarity and the full participation of others, thoughtfully navigating the [challenges too often encountered](#) in the establishment of interdisciplinary sustainability institutions at universities. The ED will facilitate the execution of the plan, bringing experienced judgment, creative perspective and, crucially, a naturally inclusive personality.

**Develop strategic partnerships** – The ED will build sustainable, strategic relationships with Drexel and Academy faculty, staff and students as well as local community representatives and organizations (including those that compete with, as well as complement, The Collaboratory’s initiatives). She/he/they will work with stakeholders to identify emerging research opportunities and forge coalitions that align with The Collaboratory’s mission and optimize its tools and resources. Partnerships could include but are not limited to project development and execution collaborations, organizational affiliations, professional development programming, conferences and events, commissions, and advocacy coalitions.

**Serve as a leading voice and spokesperson** – The ED will be a powerful voice for The Collaboratory, serving as a bridge builder between Drexel, the Academy and a broad network that includes prospective community collaborators, partners and supporters on campus, organizational partners, policymakers, donors, foundations, government agencies, and others. She/he/they will lead The Collaboratory’s launch and growth over time, meeting with current and potential supporters to tell the story of The Collaboratory and engage others in communicating its success.

**Organize and lead community-based research** – As The Collaboratory evolves, the ED will engage in an array of new and varied activities in support of its mission. The ED will ensure the appropriate resources, processes, policies, and procedures are in place to support The Collaboratory’s development and both widen and sustain its reciprocal relationships with increasingly diverse stakeholders.

**Manage sponsor relationships and secure funding opportunities** – The Collaboratory is fortunate to be near many of its potential sponsors/industry partners. The ED must proactively engage with external funding entities on a regular basis, as well as with prospective state, industry, and private-sector sponsors, building, maintaining, and strengthening relationships to ensure The Collaboratory’s work is continually supported and well received.

**Foster a culture of collaboration, communication, and cohesion** – With The Collaboratory as a highly visible partnership between Drexel and the Academy, it is advantageously positioned to enjoy the best of both a research university and a museum. The ED must take full advantage of this unique identity and set of relationships by realizing and celebrating the synergies that exist. The ED will model creative and inclusive leadership and develop an organizational culture that models the values of Drexel and the Academy.

**Attract, support, and develop a diverse and high-performing team** – Through its home at Drexel and its deep relationship with the Academy, The Collaboratory boasts access to a strong team of leaders, faculty, students, and staff deeply committed to their work and the mission that The Collaboratory represents. As initial projects achieve impact, and awareness of The Collaboratory grows, it will be crucial that the ED lead project team recruitment and retention efforts that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, professional development, career advancement, and technical excellence. The ED will carefully and consistently incorporate themes from Drexel and the Academy’s strategic plans, build on the momentum of each institution, and draw on the distinctive assets that both afford to attract and retain talented professionals for Collaboratory initiatives.

**Develop and implement an operational strategy that supports growth** — Infrastructure developments that both promote and support The Collaboratory’s growth are crucial. The ED will be instrumental in ensuring that the aspirations of The Collaboratory are realized and supported by internal processes and systems that reflect the needs and stature of a signature Drexel initiative. She/he/they will have the opportunity to identify and address The Collaboratory’s evolving needs in areas such as technology, physical space, staff hiring and development, budget processes, student and fellows support, donor engagement, and others as identified.

## DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

- Demonstrated entrepreneurial experience, including formulating and executing on a strategic plan in support of growing and scaling an organization in terms of staff, budget, activity, and impact;
- Experience with environmental issues central to The Collaboratory’s activities, including environmental justice;
- Outstanding diplomatic and negotiation skills and the ability to articulate complex and nuanced topics accurately in multiple contexts;
- An agent of change with the ability to influence and persuade among peers and partners;
- Exceptional project management experience with strong attention to detail and the ability to manage quick-turnaround deliverables, long-term strategy implementation, reporting, and metrics tracking;
- A clear, open, and relatable communication style, with the skills to adapt information delivery to a wide array of internal and external constituents;



- A commitment to policies and practices that promote equity and a more just society, particularly for underserved communities;
- Strong inclination toward experience with interdisciplinary collaboration and an ability to work across constituencies;
- Keen emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills and the ability to work well on a team in a fast-paced environment;
- The energy, enthusiasm, and ability to secure funds on behalf of The Collaboratory, including garnering support from private sector sources;
- Excellent decision-making and delegating abilities paired with a transparent, collegial, inclusive, and consensus-building approach to implementing change that draws in talented parties;
- The ability to develop positive, memorable experiences that attract leaders, participants, and collaborators from diverse fields within The Collaboratory's topical foci for the long term;
- Imagination, persistence, and integrity;
- The ability to represent The Collaboratory to a wide array of constituents to bolster research-to-impact opportunities and communicate this work externally in ways that focus positive attention on The Collaboratory and its partners;
- Demonstrated success in developing and motivating internal teams, especially those consisting of world-class researchers and thought leaders who can be led through influence rather than traditional hierarchies;
- Facility with budgets and a record of effectively allocating resources;
- Demonstrated leadership practices that foster diversity, inclusion, and equity within an organization and a history of promoting initiatives and practices that support scholars and practitioners from underrepresented groups;
- Ability and interest in engaging with communities facing inequity and hardship, and in building connections with other organizations, industries, and government partners;
- Demonstrated commitment to transparency;
- An advanced degree (M.A., M.B.A., J.D., Ph.D.); and,
- Experience in or demonstrated familiarity with higher education.

For best consideration, please send all nominations and applications to:



Jim Sirianni, Managing Director  
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*Drexel University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and actively seeks applications from qualified women and minority candidates.*