



**Anti-Racism Task Force
Admissions and Prospective Student Committee Report
February 2021**

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Executive Summary

At the reading of this report, the College of Arts and Sciences is hosting a community reading and discussion of *Ebony & Ivy*, a book written by Craig Steven Wilder published in 2013. The book examines the connections between slavery, racism, and the founding of Universities in America. In the second paragraph of the prologue Wilder writes “The founding, financing, and development of higher education in the colonies were thoroughly intertwined with the economic and social forces that transformed West and Central Africa through the slave trade and devastated indigenous nations in the Americas. The academy was a beneficiary and defender of these processes.”

Although Drexel University founded in 1891 is too young of a university to be a part of the history Wilder writes about in *Ebony & Ivy*, Harvard 1636, William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), and College of New Jersey (Princeton 1746), the ramifications of an institution that had no intent of educating the enslaved people who labored to build it, still manifests in higher education. Consequently, it was the responsibility of our committee to determine if systemic impediments to the application and enrollment processes existed at Drexel and make recommendations to increase the enrollment and retention of Black/African American students. The Admissions and Prospective Student Committee reviewed data in Tableau and data provided by Associate Vice President of Enrollment Analytics, Tom Gutman. To appreciate the data within context, meetings were held with Senior Vice President of Enrollment Management, Evelyn Thimba, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management, Vincent Amoroso, and Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Michael Keaton.

The committee’s work did not find University wide systematic impediments to the application and enrollment processes for Black /African American students. However, whether academic inequities and preparation for college in K-12 education or serious concerns about college affordability, we did find nationwide systematic impediments and opportunity gaps that many Black/African American students encounter before ever stepping foot on our campus. Therefore, the succeeding recommendations are made to address some of our findings of our country’s systematic impediments and augment the current enrollment management efforts to combat the disparities.

GOAL	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE
Enroll a critical mass of Black / African American undergraduate and graduate students over a five-year period from 2021 – 2026.	Remove real and perceived barriers to the admissions process.	Retain test-optional admissions policy.	Provost; Senior VP of Enrollment Management; Dean of Undergraduate Admissions
	Increase and develop culturally competent and anti-racist undergraduate, graduate, and college recruitment teams and student ambassadors.	Reinforce and increase the roles dedicated to the sourcing, identification, recruitment, and on-boarding of Black students: -Add Team Members (2) Require DEI awareness, unconscious bias & cultural competency training for undergraduate, graduate, and college recruitment teams and student ambassadors.	Senior VP of Enrollment Management; Dean of Undergraduate Admissions EM Director of Diversity Initiatives & Community Relations; Executive Director of Diversity & Inclusive Culture
	Create a robust talent pipeline to attract Black/African American students regionally and nationally.	Identify and establish formal MOUs with targeted middle and high schools to provide coaching to and through college. Establish an articulation agreement with Xavier University at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.	EM Director of Diversity Initiatives & Community Relations; Office of Government & Community Relations; School of Education Office of the Provost; Dean of Undergraduate Admissions; Dean of Graduate Admissions

		<p>Attract Black/African American students to sports defined by privilege (squash, golf, lacrosse, and rowing)</p> <p>Increase representation of Black/African American staff/coaches and provide unconscious bias & cultural competency training for all athletic staff/coaches</p>	<p>Director of Athletics; Coaching Staff; Office of Government & Community Relations</p> <p>Director of Athletics; Athletic hiring officials</p>
	<p>Mitigate financial barriers for Black / African American students from low socio-economic backgrounds.</p>	<p>Transition away from Merit-based scholarships to Need-based scholarships only</p> <p>Provide Transparent Actual Pricing</p> <p>Investigate, identify, and implement preadmission / community college transfer programs with feeder community colleges</p>	<p>President Fry, Board of Trustees, Senior Vice President of Enrollment Management, Associate Vice Provost of Enrollment Management</p>

Goal and Rationale

Goal:

Enroll a critical mass of Black /African American undergraduate and graduate students over a five-year period from 2021 – 2026.

Rational:

Drexel was founded with a mission to provide educational opportunities in the practical arts and sciences for women and men of all backgrounds. At six-week census, the fall 2020 snapshot of students by race and ethnicity supports Drexel’s pledge to diversity reporting 8.3% of enrolled undergraduate and graduate students 7% and 11% respectively, identify as African American. Although our University may never reflect the Black/African American population of the city of Philadelphia which is 44.1% Black, recognizing that our nation is experiencing a time of social reckoning regarding race and priorities of the University’s 10-year strategic plan include empowering students to be purpose-driven, global citizens and fostering and strengthening an inclusive and equity driven culture, it is imperative that we start to dismantle the systemic barriers historically underrepresented students face in gaining access to higher education and work to enroll a critical mass of Black/African American undergraduate and graduate students at Drexel with an ambition to reflect, at minimum, the national representation of Black or African Americans in the United States which according to the United States Census Bureau is 13.4% of the population.

Objective One:

Remove real or perceived barriers to the admissions process.

Strategy One:

Retain test-optional admissions policy.

For decades, there has been spirited debates and research surrounding the standardized college admissions tests SAT and ACT and their biases favoring the privilege and affluent communities while rebuffing underserved and underrepresented Black/African American and Brown communities. The COVID-19 pandemic once again brought said biases and others to the forefront adding inequities and opportunity gaps for Black/African American and Brown students. The primary inequity exposed to the masses centered around access to technology such as laptops, internet connectivity and online learning platforms. It is of the opinion of this committee that we retain the test-optional policy implemented during the COVID crisis to level the playing field for Black/African American students, particularly in underserved communities. It will also give the University an opportunity to perform due diligence and examine the academic performance of more than one cohort of undergraduate students who applied and were admitted without test scores during the 2021 enrollment cycle.

Objective Two:

Increase and develop culturally competent and anti-racist undergraduate, graduate, and college recruitment teams and student ambassadors.

Strategy One:

Reinforce the EMSS role of director of diversity initiatives and community relations by supporting the role with two team members who, with other admissions counselor and territory management duties, will focus on recruiting historically underrepresented students and on-boarding Black/African American students. To identify and recruit a critical mass of Black/African American students, the Anti-Racist Subcommittee on Admissions and Prospective Students, recommends increasing the team and developing culturally competent and anti-racist undergraduate, graduate, and college recruitment teams and student ambassadors by championing the current role of director of diversity initiatives and community relations and supporting the role with two additional team members. It is the opinion of the committee that this team composition will afford the director latitude and opportunity to develop a University-wide approach to recruiting traditionally underrepresented students and serve as a respected and inclusive leadership voice to the needs and issues facing Black/African American college-aspiring students. Furthermore, under the direction of the director, this model will allow one team member to work collaboratively with the director and with DEI partners to develop and deliver on-going anti-racism, diversity, and cultural competency educational programming while the second team member works collaboratively with the director and key campus stakeholders and community-based organizations to identify and develop recruitment and pipeline opportunities for Black/African American students.

Strategy Two:

Require DEI awareness, unconscious bias, and cultural competency training for undergraduate, graduate, and college recruitment teams and student ambassadors. The committee recommends moving beyond diversity compliance policies and being more intentional in training teams charged with recruitment across the University to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures; recognize one's own biases and work to mitigate them in the recruitment and admissions processes; and work towards the goal of an anti-racist and welcoming community. As previously mentioned, the training should be led by the director of diversity initiatives and community relations and coordinated by a team member in collaboration with, OED's executive director of diversity and inclusive culture and other University DEI partners. To ensure valuable and substantive learning experiences, it is also recommended that there is an evaluative measure for participants in DEI awareness, unconscious bias & cultural competency training.

Objective Three:

Create a robust talent pipeline to attract Black/African American students regionally and nationally.

Strategy One:

Identify and establish formal agreements with targeted middle and high schools to provide coaching to and through college.

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that sixty-seven years after Brown versus the Board of Education, racial disparities, and its impact on K - 12 education in communities of color, particularly the Black/African American communities, exists. In short, the education system in our country is still separate and unequal. Data taken from the 2015 / 2016 Office of Civil Rights data collection reveals:

- Black students receive single suspensions 3.4 times more often than white students
- Black students placed in special education 1.1 times more often than white students
- White students placed in gifted education 3.2 times more often than Black students
- Black students retained in grade 2.2 more times than white students
- White students took AP courses 2.3 times more often than Black students

The Anti-Racist Subcommittee on Admissions and Prospective Student Committee is cognizant that the University cannot solve this national crisis of systematic and racial disparities in K – 12 education. However, the recommendations that we identify and establish formal agreements with targeted middle and high schools to provide coaching to and through college suggest that we can play a significant role in changing the trajectory of talented and gifted Black / African American students. There are two existing models that we recommend the University's responsible units investigate with the plan of adapting one and develop a robust pipeline of undergraduate Black students.

1. Steppingstone Scholars <https://www.stepsstonescholars.org/>. This program supports approximately 300 students in grades 5 – 12 providing services to create pathways to college.
2. USC Headstart Program <https://www.usc.edu.au/study/courses-and-programs/headstart-program-year-11-and-12-students>. Currently, the University supports the dynamic High School Scholars Program allowing talented, rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors to take one course per quarter for free with current Drexel students. USC's Headstart Program takes the concept further by allowing talented high school juniors and seniors to take courses at a reduced rate fulfilling high school graduation requirement and earning college credits.

Strategy Two:

Precedence has been set with the Spelman College and Drexel's Thomas R. Kline School of Law 3+3 accelerated program. Undergraduates attending Spelman College, a private historically Black women's liberal arts college in Atlanta, Georgia, will be able to enroll in Kline Law after their third year of study providing, they meet admissions requirements. The Anti-Racist Subcommittee on Admissions and Prospective Student Committee recommends creating a 3+3 articulation agreement with Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Xavier, founded by Saint Katherine Drexel who was committed to the education of African American and Native Americans, remains the first and only historically Black and Catholic institution in the United States. There are opportunities for 3+3 agreements between Xavier and Drexel's graduate programs in Nursing, Business, Computer Science, and Chemical Engineering. We recommend the University's responsible units investigate this opportunity with the plan of recruiting talented and gifted Black / African American undergraduates to Drexel's graduate programs.

Strategy Three:

Attract Black/African American students to sports defined by privilege (squash, golf, lacrosse, and rowing)

Drexel University has nationally recognized programs in the sports of squash, golf, lacrosse, and rowing. Traditionally, these sports are a product of privilege. While it will be tough to develop a recruiting pipeline in these sports with Black/African American students, there still can be efforts done on Drexel's end to enhance relationships in the local Philadelphia community by exposing children to these sports. By partnering with local organizations, Drexel Athletics can have a footprint within the local community, bringing children to campus and letting them participate in sports that they may not be exposed to otherwise. These students can take a campus tour, eat lunch in the dining halls and see what life is like on a campus in their own neighborhoods. This may not necessarily increase Black/African American students' participation in varsity athletics, but it may spark an interest in these sports that they could possibly pursue at the club level in college, potentially at Drexel.

Strategy Four:

Increase representation of Black/African American staff and provide unconscious bias & cultural competency training for all athletic staff/coaches

Representation in an athletics department can bring immense value not only to the staff but to the students as well. Having a diverse staff allows for varying thoughts, discussions, and mindsets when making decisions as a department. Presently, Drexel Athletics does not have a Black/African American staff member that is in a position leveled higher than assistant director. There are approximately 20 staff members in the department that are above the assistant director level and all are white. For an institution that has Black/African American student-athletes, there is virtually no representation for them at the highest levels.

Additionally, unconscious bias and cultural competency training would be of value to the athletics department as Drexel Athletics has facilities located in the West Philadelphia neighborhoods. This training and subsequent conversations would help the relationships between the athletics department and the surrounding neighborhoods. The trainings would also assist hiring managers to understand their unconscious biases and help to diversify the department.

Objective Four:

Mitigate financial barriers for Black / African American students from low socio-economic backgrounds. <https://theithacan.org/news/low-income-students-face-systemic-barriers-to-college-access/>

Students from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds pay the steepest cost relative to family income for college tuition. The average cost of college as a percentage of family income is five times greater for families in the bottom 20% of the income distribution compared to those in the top 20%. Institutions of higher learning like Drexel, have felt the need to continue to increase the cost of tuition to combat the decreasing state and federal

support given to college and universities. Pell Grants, for example, covered nearly 80% of the cost of attending a four-year public college at their inception. Today Pell Grants barely cover 30% of the cost of tuition. Drexel’s Office of Planning and Institutional Research reported that 27.3% of the entering class of 2020 - 2021 received Pell Grants. To be eligible for a Pell Grant, students total family income must not exceed \$50,000 a year. Additionally, the stigma of the “un-affordability” of college extends beyond the cost of tuition, but includes fringe expenses like food, books, housing, and travel. Students of color from lower socio-economic backgrounds are often discouraged from applying to high tuition schools because they are often left with no financial margin or safety-net, resulting in the slightest unexpected financial expense completely derailing their plans to successfully complete their degree requirements.

Strategy One:

Transition away from Merit-based scholarships to Need-based scholarships only

<https://tcf.org/content/report/michigans-tuition-incentive-program-model-national-need-based-financial-aid/>

The awarding of merit-based scholarships often results in high-income students receiving more resources than their demonstrated need, while low-income students routinely have unmet financial need. Nationally, the average merit award given to individual students is about \$1,500 larger than the average award based on need, according to the [Department of Education](#). Many private institutions, including Ivy League schools have completely eliminated merit scholarships for students without demonstrated financial need.

Strategy Two:

Provide Transparent Actual Pricing

Drexel should maintain a commitment to provide a multi-year estimate of actual and net prices that may help students and families develop realistic funding plans.

Strategy Three:

Investigate, identify, and implement preadmission / community college transfer programs with feeder community colleges

Black/African American students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds disproportionately start their college careers at a community college. For these students, only 10 percent matriculate to a 4-year college and graduate within 6 years, according to a study by the Community College Research Center at Columbia University’s Teachers College. This serves as an untapped resource for Drexel given the strength of the local Community Colleges. More than an articulation agreement, the CUNY ASAP program currently stands as a model for such an approach.

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBLE
Increase the 6-year graduation rate of Black / African American students	Secure a commitment and financial investment from the colleges and schools to increase graduation rates of Black / African American students.	Replicate LeBow BRIDGE (Build Relationships in Diverse Group Experiences) in each college and school.	Deans
	Increase student emergency funding (Operation Graduation)	Create dedicated funding source at both the college level and university-wide to provide emergency funding for Black/African American students in jeopardy of not meeting financial responsibilities to complete their academic programs.	Deans; Institutional Advancement

Goal and Rationale

Goal:

Increase the six-year graduation rate of Black / African American students.

Rational:

The University has made great strides in improving its first to second year retention rate. The 2019-2020 Drexel University Factbook, reports that the University retained 88% of the 2018 entering cohort identified as white, 84% of students identified as Black / African American, and 86% of student identifying as LatinX. Conversely, the cohort of white students entering in 2013 had a six-year graduation rate of 71% while their Black / African American and LatinX peers had the lowest 6-year graduation rates of 53% and 55% respectively (Office of Planning and Institutional Research, 2019). While the University has realized significant improvements in first year to second year retention rates across all demographics, a concerted effort must be made to close the six-year graduation rates between white, Black, and LatinX students.

In *Completing College: A National View of Student Attainment Rates by Race and Ethnicity – Fall 2010 Cohort*, published in April 2017, the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center found that nationally, Black and LatinX students had the lowest graduation rates compared to their peers. Thirty-eight percent of Black students who started at a college or university in the fall of 2010 graduated while 45.8% of their LatinX peers graduated. Meanwhile, 62% of their White peers and 63.2% of their Asian peers graduated (Shapiro, D. et al., 2017). It is evident that there is a clear disparity between graduation rates of students of color compared to those of white and Asian students. While the percentage of Black / African American and LatinX students graduating at Drexel is higher than the statistics noted in this study, the disparity is real.

In *Where did they Go: Retention Rates for Students of Color at Predominantly White Institutions*, Kevin McClain and April Perry highlight four factors that contribute to the retention of students of color. Two of these factors include, “programming/initiatives that support the enlistment, preservation, and commencement of students of color,” and “cultural spaces,” (McClain, K. et. al, 2017). McClain and Perry emphasize that students of color face unique obstacles in their transition to college whether it is cultural, academic, societal or lifestyle based. Therefore, programming developed specifically for these students allows them to develop their peer network, prepare for the upcoming year, and connect with potential mentors.

Objective:

Secure a commitment and financial investment from the colleges and schools to increase graduation rates of Black / African American students.

Strategy One:

Replicate the academic enrichment program designed for historically underrepresented and underserved students, LeBow BRIDGE (Build Relationships in Diverse Group Experiences) in each college and school. The architect of LeBow BRIDGE is Dr. Brian Ellis supported by the master’s thesis research of Dr. Tasha Gardner, “Developing a Model Pre-College Program for College in Urban Areas to Address the High School to College preparation Gap for Low-Income Students”. This proven program and approach to retaining and creating a sense of belonging and community for underrepresented and underserved students of color, was recognized in 2017 by BizEd Magazine (AACSB) as an “Idea in Action” (<https://bized.aacsb.edu/articles/2017/11/improving-outcomes-for-minority-students>). LeBow BRIDGE is a high touch program with intentional programming providing academic support, community, social capital and what the director of the program, Porsche Johnson, describes as “intrusive advising”. To date, the program has 140 active students, more than 70 alumni, and reports a first to second year retention rate of 92%.

Taken directly from their website, the mission of Lebow BRIDGE is to **Build Relationships in Diverse Group Experiences** by developing student potential and preparing them for an ever-changing world. BRIDGE exists to enhance the student experience and foster a sense of belonging, engagement, and empowerment to ensure student success at Drexel.

The BRIDGE Program has four focused pillars for student success:

- Academic Excellence - Students are provided one-on-one academic support and advising to ensure their retention, persistence, and graduation.

- Community Service - Students participate in enriching community service experiences to better themselves through improving their community and society.
- Financial Literacy - Students are equipped with the skills to understand personal financial management and planning for a strong future.
- Social Engagement - Students are provided space and activities to learn about themselves and others in a comfortable environment.

Recognizing the impact and success of LeBow BRIDGE, Westphal College of Media Arts and Design launched Westphal BRIDGE in the fall of 2020 under the direction of Denise Snow. <https://drexel.edu/westphal/resources/bridge-program/>. It is the opinion of this committee that with a commitment from the deans to provide human and financial resources to replicate the BRIDGE Program, the University will realize and increase its first to second year retention rates and persistence to graduation rates for Black/African American students and other historically underrepresented students.

Strategy Two:

In partnership with Institutional Advancement, the recommendation is to create dedicated emergency funding source at both the college level and university-wide to provide emergency funding for Black/African American students in jeopardy of not meeting financial responsibilities to complete their academic program. An example of this emergency funding specifically designated for students of color can be found at Smith College: <https://www.smith.edu/about-smith/multicultural-affairs/funding>.

Government emergency relief funding although focused on the disproportionate effects on students of color is not a secure source: <https://ticas.org/affordability-2/federal-budget-and-tax-policy/whats-in-the-new-higher-education-emergency-relief/>. Private and corporate funding is another avenue to investigate as well: <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2020/04/30/companies-nonprofits-launch-emergency-student-aid-effort>.

If we are committed to increasing retention and graduate rates of our Black/African American students we need to not only examine and support academic and emotional needs, but to provide a vehicle in which financial assistance can be made available during hardship.