

# Drexel University Anti-Racism Task Force Policies and Procedures Sub-Committee

Executive Summary January 2021

*“The beauty of anti-racism is that you don’t have to pretend to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it’s the only way forward.” — Ijeoma Oluo*

**Charge:** The Policies and Procedures Sub-Committee (PPSC) of Drexel University’s Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) was charged to “focus on assessing institutional policies and practices to explore levels of institutional racism that can affect campus culture.”<sup>1</sup> To do this, we reviewed Drexel’s philosophical and technical approach to policies and procedures as well as the content of existing University policies and procedures. The PPSC was further charged to develop an anti-racist framework for a new approach to policies and procedures and the development of future content of policies and procedures and to state any needed revisions to the existing content of University policies and procedures. The following recommendations will also aid in building trust among all members of the Drexel community, including Black and Brown students, faculty, and professional staff.

**Process:** Starting in July 2020, the PPSC met regularly for five (5) months to discuss anti-racism in the context of Drexel’s policies and procedures with a focus on internal administrative and student experience, and external input into current directives for enhancing University protocols. During our meetings, the 10-member PPSC discussed our own experiences with policies and procedures in our various roles at the University and the challenges our experiences present. To further our work, we met with key Drexel stakeholders related to the development, implementation and enforcement of policies and procedures, including Human Resources, Office of Equality and Diversity, Office of Research and Innovation, Office of the Provost, Student Success, Enrollment Management, and University Communications. We asked these administrative officers for input concerning their approach to ensuring equity and anti-racism in their administrative departments, what processes exist for developing policies and procedures, and how they see the policies and procedures sub-committee supporting their work. We also met with the Undergraduate Student Government Association (USGA) and the Graduate Student Association (GSA) to solicit information regarding their experiences and expectations of University policies and procedures, and their impact on Drexel students. We examined processes in place at other universities, such as the University of Minnesota’s Equity Lens policy review process.<sup>2</sup> Finally, we worked with knowledgeable colleagues and researched and contacted noted consultants in the field of anti-racism and organizational diversity to seek information for external evaluation of Drexel’s policies, procedures and practices.

As a result of this process, we developed the below recommendations to move Drexel University’s policies and procedures from the current state -- low-capacity, according to the Evolution of an Anti-Racism Institution<sup>3</sup> -- to a moderate and ultimately high-capacity institution in which all University community members realize equal access and enjoyment of the learning and research opportunities that are unique to Drexel.

**Recommendations:** The PPSC organized our recommendations into five key categories based upon the normal lifecycle of an institutional policy and to better steer policy development. The categories are presented as action items due to the urgency of Drexel’s anti-racism mission. The five categories of our recommendations include: Define, Process, Draft, Communicate, and Review. We define each element in our recommendations

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1. Email communication from Kim Gholston regarding the charge of the Policies and Procedures Sub-Committee of Drexel University Anti-Racism Task Force, July 5, 2020.

2. “Equity Lens,” University Policy Library, University of Minnesota, last accessed January 18, 2021, <https://policy.umn.edu/equity-lens>.

<sup>3</sup> “Evolution of an Anti-Racist Institution,” Drexel University Anti-Racism Task Force, power point slide.

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but offer the below supporting insights to highlight the importance and impact of each recommendation on anti-racism work at Drexel.

**Define: Drexel must create a clear directive regarding key terms essential to any anti-racism agenda.**

A centralized glossary of key terms related to Drexel's anti-racism mission is essential to establish a common understanding and usage of terms throughout the University community. The list of key terms that require explicit definition includes: Racism, Equity, Inclusion, Implicit Bias, and Institutional Racism. The definitions of these terms, as they are to be understood and applied at Drexel University, should be developed in conjunction with the leading thought on characteristics of white supremacy and structural racism at organizations, such as anecdotes that can be found in Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun's book, *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*.<sup>4</sup>

**Process: Drexel must ensure significant representation of Black community members in the various bodies responsible for and influential in the creation and enforcement of policies and procedures.** As the University asks its Black community members to trust its intentions, there must be increased, meaningful representation of those members in the many spaces where such representation either does not exist or is woefully minimal. This representation must not merely be a matter of boosting numbers but must also ensure that these voices are heard and considered to show, through actions, that the University's commitment to anti-racism is real. Representation of Black community members must be commensurate with the numbers of Black students, faculty, and professional staff at the University. Black representation must also be visible and effective in University leadership, in departments, programs, committees and councils including but not limited to: Human Resources, Undergraduate Advising Center, Executive Advisory Committees, Executive Council, Board of Trustees, and many other committees and groups at Drexel with responsibility for developing and upholding policies and procedures. Once formed, we must ensure that the composition of the Policy Advisory Committee is diverse and inclusive.

**Draft: Drexel must implement annual anti-racism training for all trustees, students, faculty, professional staff, and external partners.** The current diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings made available by Drexel do not adequately address anti-racism or the need for every member of the community to receive such training. New and updated training content must be developed or obtained. More importantly, to build a real and sustained anti-racism culture at Drexel, anti-racism training must be made mandatory for all Drexel community members on a regular and ongoing basis to effect the cultural change that purposeful anti-racism work requires. By not wavering on this commitment to required awareness, training and education, Drexel's commitment to building a culture of equity would be immediately and impactfully felt across the entire organization.

**Communicate: Drexel must commit to being open and transparent about its anti-racism efforts, including in its policies, procedures, guidelines, and the related review and approval processes.** To build and maintain trust in our community, Drexel must be transparent about every step of the anti-racism process. Without clear, transparent communication of its reviews, challenges, tensions and decisions, the University will remain encumbered with distrust about its strategic plan and accountability for failures to hold all members of the University to its standards. This transparency is most important in areas of the University where the perceived clandestine existence and application of policies and procedures can have the most negative effect on the anti-

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4. "The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture," Showing Up for Racial Justice, last accessed January 18, 2021, <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-characteristics.html>

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racism goal, such as in Public Safety, Human Resources and Student Life, where the impact on the lives of Drexel's students, faculty and professional staff are most pronounced.

**Review: Drexel must commit to regular objective, equity lens-based external review of its policies and procedures to ensure the University meets its stated goal of promoting an anti-racist agenda.** This step is crucial to any progress the University hopes to make in furthering its anti-racist agenda in four ways. First, such a review will interrupt the echo chamber in which policies and procedures are currently developed. Second, a review will bring in external experts who are capable of critically assessing the state of our policies, advising on best practices in equity and diversity, and competently addressing key areas of concern in the University. Third, an external review will help the University to design a plan forward for building internal capabilities to monitor and review our policies, procedures and related practices on an ongoing basis. Finally, implementing a regular equity lens review of University and individual college and school-level policymaking and policy enforcement will help ensure we are more apt to meet the equity mission at every level of the University. Thus, regular external review is needed to move Drexel towards a high-capacity, anti-racist institution with the skills and resources required to sustain those changes effectively.

While we offer these recommendations with the attainable goal of steering Drexel towards valuing the richness of every student, faculty and professional staff member, we stress that none of the above-mentioned recommendations will have a chance to effect change if the University fails to properly invest in this work. Significant initial and sustained financial investment in the work of anti-racism is not only vital, but without it, the University's charge will not be taken seriously. The change that is necessary to become a high-capacity anti-racist institution requires substantial financial investment, and at this time, existing resources and budgetary allocations are not sufficient to invest in all facets of this work on an ongoing basis. Our research has revealed that organizations, even small, local public educational institutions, that sincerely work to address the structural racism inherent in their operations are investing large amounts into personnel and programming. Likewise, Drexel needs to invest at least \$250K annually to begin to fund necessary people, processes, and systems to support these policy and procedure recommendations. This sustained financial investment is how the University signifies the importance of its anti-racism stance in practice, not just in theory.

Finally, we offer a word on becoming an anti-racist institution. To deeply integrate the tenets of anti-racism in the fabric of our community and operations, Drexel must counteract the inherent institutional racism that exists. In the American Council on Education's 2020 publication, "Leading After a Racial Crisis: Weaving a Campus Tapestry of Diversity and Inclusion," the Council introduced the "weaver-leader framework" for racial recovery that "connects several foundational leadership activities, including over-communicating, setting expectations, and building relationships, all in the service of creating shared expectations or a common ground on which to move forward."<sup>5</sup> We note that the use of the metaphor of weaving a tapestry is dispositive to educational institutions' efforts to create an environment of anti-racism and inclusion. As defined in the Oxford Dictionary, a tapestry is an intricate or complex combination of things or sequence of events, such as "a tapestry of cultures, races, and customs." We, Drexel University collectively, are the weavers of our tapestry of equity with the threads of our Shared Values of Integrity, Inclusion, Impact, Integration, and Innovation. To ensure that this tapestry is inseparable from the tenets of anti-racism, we must develop the attached

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5. "Leading After a Racial Crisis: Weaving a Campus Tapestry of Diversity and Inclusion," American Council on Education, last accessed January 18, 2021, <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Leading-After-a-Racial-Crisis.pdf>, viii.

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recommendations with a sense of urgency as we seek to achieve each part of our strategic plan, the basis for our future, using anti-racism and equity as our leading lens.

*“Life is very short and what we have to do must be done in the now.” – Audre Lorde*

**Respectfully Submitted,**

Anti-Racism Task Force

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