

BIOGRAPHY



John Fry, appointed Drexel University's 14th president in 2010, has served higher education for his entire professional life. Through his roles as a consultant, board member, chief operating officer and chief executive, he has acquired a deep and broad understanding of the challenges of leading a major educational institution.

Fry has transformed Drexel into a private research university with a strong public purpose — an institution that harnesses both its long-established and still-emerging strengths to serve its students, its neighborhood, its city and the nation. Under Fry's leadership, Drexel set a national example for the successful execution of public-private partnerships and became a powerful force for economic development in the Greater Philadelphia region. He has championed major neighborhood revitalization initiatives, including the creation of a multi-faceted university extension center in Mantua — the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships — extensive economic development efforts, and significant partnerships to support local neighborhood schools.

Fry has announced high-impact academic initiatives to increase the breadth of opportunity for students and faculty. He negotiated a groundbreaking merger in 2011 with the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, America's oldest major natural history museum and a world leader in natural sciences research. Drexel launched the Charles D. Close School of Entrepreneurship in 2013 to integrate entrepreneurial learning into the curriculum and support campus innovators. And Fry has forged a series of academic and research partnerships to enhance Drexel's global connections in China, Turkey, Israel, Brazil, Chile, India and South Korea.

Fulfilling a commitment made to Drexel's neighbors in his first address as Drexel president, Fry has championed major neighborhood initiatives including the PECO-Drexel Education Collaborative supporting local public schools, the Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation and the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships. He also attracted corporate partners to invest in Drexel's campus development; for example, American Campus Communities has invested more than \$300 million in residential/retail projects, which will reduce the destabilizing effect of student housing on surrounding blocks, while Drexel's enhanced Employee Home Purchase Assistance Program encourages increased owner occupancy in the neighborhood.

A focal point of Drexel's strategic plan is to become an even greater economic engine for Greater Philadelphia. Fry announced the creation of Drexel Ventures, a subsidiary enterprise to help faculty and students partner with the private sector to build businesses around their inventions. And those relationships will be at the heart of Schuylkill Yards, a \$3.5 billion mixed-

use development on University real estate adjacent to Philadelphia's Amtrak 30th Street Station.

Under Fry, Drexel also has seen a significant increase in fundraising and a growing number of philanthropic partners. Landmark gifts in recent years include \$50 million from Thomas R. Kline to support the Kline School of Law and \$45 million from Dana and David Dornsife to support the Dornsife School of Public Health. A \$400 million campaign reached its goal ahead of schedule in 2013 and brought in more than 16,000 new donors, including raising faculty and staff participation from 12 to 62 percent. The years since have each set new records in philanthropy to Drexel, culminating in a record \$120.7 million for Fiscal Year 2015-16. In November 2017, Fry launched a new, four-year campaign to raise \$750 million.

Fry came to Drexel from Franklin & Marshall College, where he served as president from 2002 and was instrumental in the college's academic growth, campus and neighborhood development and improved finances. He raised the college's national profile and brought renewed confidence to the institution. During his tenure, the quality of the student body improved dramatically as measured by a 63-point gain in average SAT scores over seven years. He also improved the student-to-faculty ratio to 10:1 by adding more than 40 faculty lines, oversaw an updated curriculum and made a long-term commitment to increase financial aid. Fry forged new partnerships with the city and neighbors, improving the surrounding business district and neighborhoods.

From 1995 to 2002, Fry served as executive vice president of the University of Pennsylvania. He was a major force in developing and implementing Penn's "Agenda for Excellence," a comprehensive plan that guided strategic initiatives from 1996 to 2001. He also built a coalition of nonprofit, business, neighborhood and governmental organizations in support of a multi-pronged strategy to address the key challenges facing the University City neighborhood in West Philadelphia. In a relatively short period of time, residential property values rose significantly, the crime rate declined dramatically and hundreds of millions of dollars were invested in commercial infrastructure and economic development.

Before joining Penn, Fry was a management consultant for the higher education and nonprofit sectors. He worked closely with some of the nation's premier colleges and universities, first with KPMG Peat Marwick and then with Coopers & Lybrand's National Higher Education Consulting Practice, where he was elected partner and eventually became partner-in-charge of the national practice.

Fry served a three-year term ending in March 2017 as a member of the board of directors of the American Council on Education, representing fellow U.S. university presidents in the nation's most influential higher education association. Most recently, he was appointed to the boards of the Philadelphia Orchestra Association, as well as the [Kresge Foundation](#), which invests more than \$160 million annually to foster economic and social change. Previously, Fry was named to the Wistar Institute, which conducts biomedical research in the fields of cancer, immunology and infectious diseases, and the board of the Advanced Functional Fabrics of

America (AFFOA), part of the White House's [National Network for Manufacturing Innovation](#) (NNMI). He also serves on the board of Lafayette College. He was the founding chairman of the University City District and served in that capacity for five years. He served as two years as chairman of the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia, concluding his tenure in October 2018. In January 2020, Fry was appointed to the board of directors of the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank.

Fry formerly served as chair of the NCAA Division III Presidents Council and chair of U.S. Squash, the national governing body for the sport. He was appointed by President George W. Bush to the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary Commission and co-chaired the transition team of Governor-Elect Edward Rendell of Pennsylvania. In 2014, Fry chaired the transition team of then Pennsylvania Governor-Elect Tom Wolf.

A native of Brooklyn, N.Y., Fry graduated from Lafayette College and earned a master's degree in business administration from the New York University Stern School of Business.

Fry and his wife Cara, an art historian, have three children: Mia, a recent graduate of Penn Law; Nat, an entrepreneur; and Phoebe, an undergraduate at Drexel.

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