



*Educational Innovation in the
Modern Urban University*

**The School of Education Strategic Plan
2016 - 2020
Drexel University**

Message from the Dean

Over three years ago a Drexel University task force began the process of redesigning the School of Education (SoE). After examining national trends and critical challenges confronting schools of education in the United States, and considering the vision for Drexel described in the University's new strategic plan, the task force concluded with its vision for SoE's future:

We believe the Drexel SoE can be known as the premier practice-based, community and civically-engaged, research driven institution that produces leaders who effect change in the classroom, in education administration, and in research and policy, with a reach that is local, national, and global.

I am pleased to share with you our new strategic plan for the School of Education—one which responds to, sharpens, and carries this earlier vision forward to the year 2020. Our strategic plan is the product of ten months of intense work by faculty, students, and staff. It draws on numerous conversations—online and in person; individually and in groups—that provided every member of the SoE community an opportunity to share their views. We reached out to selected faculty and administrators of Drexel's other colleges, centers and offices. And even as we move forward on the initiatives outlined in this strategic plan, we will continue to consult SoE alumni, members of the Philadelphia education community, and other community leaders so that our work remains focused, relevant, and responsive.

Our vision for SoE is especially important now—a moment when American public schools and the colleges of education that prepare teachers and leaders for them are at an inflection point. Both groups are confronting important questions: What skills and experiences are needed to ensure that graduates are prepared for the 21st-century economy they will enter? What learning environments, pedagogies and tools are best suited for teaching foundational skills, complex thinking, collaboration, adaptability and ongoing learning? How can education address inequalities in our society and be a tool for greater social justice?

These questions have motivated our strategic planning. The search for their answers will push us forward in implementing the many initiatives described in this plan. But fundamental to our planning, we have also asked ourselves: What can SoE do in the coming years, uniquely among schools of education, as a result of being a part of Drexel University?

As this strategic plan will articulate, SoE's strength flows from three commitments that we make:

- To practice-centeredness that roots everything we do in its application to daily life—confronting real problems on which we can have real impact;
- To partnerships—among Drexel colleagues and those in our community—that focus our attention on the most critical education needs of teachers, learners and leaders and allows us to bring our exceptionally deep and diverse expertise to bear on their challenges.

- To entrepreneurship, and more specifically, a rapid innovation cycle that enables us to quickly devise, test and improve on solutions to the urgent education problems of our communities and scale them up to meet the needs of others nationally and around the world.

But what gives exceptional power to these characteristics of SoE is the University foundation upon which they rest: Drexel's historical and unwavering commitment to experiential learning, engagement with its Philadelphia communities, and the application of technologies and methodologies from across disciplines to real problems and real needs.

This strategic plan, then, describes what it means to pursue educational innovation in the modern urban university, with all the responsibilities this entails and the possibilities it offers. Our work has been informed by the concerns and hopes of many beyond the School of Education—most importantly our colleagues at Drexel and the people of Philadelphia, whose high expectations inspire the very best in us.

Mission

The School of Education develops leaders, researchers, and teachers who bring their knowledge and experiences to bear on critical education and learning challenges across a range of educational contexts, from those in the Philadelphia neighborhoods that surround Drexel to others around the globe. Our faculty and graduates have powerful impact on the lives—from birth through advanced age—of the learners they serve. And the direct effect they have on local communities and society at large is amplified through the guidance, partnerships and preparation they offer to the next generation of teachers, leaders, and researchers.

Vision

The Drexel University School of Education will be among the most civically engaged, practice-centric schools of education in the nation, one that places high-quality, experiential, immersive teaching and learning at the center of everything we do. We will collaborate with partners from Drexel's rich array of colleges and centers, Philadelphia's public schools, and organizations beyond our city—with them, developing innovative education practices and tools based on our shared research and experience.

America's education challenges are urgent. They demand that we translate ideas rapidly from theory into high-impact practices—applying data and evidence to rigorously assess results, and using even our failures to quickly redesign and improve. This entrepreneurial approach, combined with our intense focus on education practice and Drexel's unwavering partnerships with our community's schools and organizations, will be distinctive of SoE. And these three forces—practice, partnerships and entrepreneurship—will deepen Drexel's impact on how we prepare students to be teachers, leaders, and producers of new thinking about teaching and learning.

Values

We share Drexel's commitment to quality, integrity, diversity, access, stewardship, and innovation. In addition, we are guided by the following values as we pursue our mission and vision.

Diversity and Inclusion – Commitment to an SoE community that reflects and welcomes the full range of human differences and draws on the diverse perspectives, experiences and backgrounds of this community to guide our decision-making and inform our research and teaching.

Collaboration – The belief that our ideas and actions—and their results—are improved by engaging those around us in collective activity, and that together we can achieve goals that no one of us could alone.

Social Justice and Equity – Our ongoing emphasis on addressing inequities of access, opportunity and resources—particularly in the education sphere but also using education as a means for achieving fair processes and just outcomes for all members of society.

Public Scholarship – Our emphasis and encouragement of research that is widely accessible, dialogic, and a catalyst for related research—work that:

- contributes to public understanding, political conversations or other applications beyond its primary discipline, audience, or purpose;
- is created in an open source manner that allows for dialogue, application, interpretation and additional creation by others; and
- resides in public or non-academic contexts and settings.

Global Citizenship – Recognition of the increasing economic, environmental, political, and cultural effects we have on individuals and societies around the world—and they on us—and the responsibility this places upon us to act with understanding and empathy across all the communities of which we are members.

Strategic Goals

I. A National Leader in Urban Education

The School of Education's partnerships with school leaders, teachers, students, families, and community members in the School District of Philadelphia exemplifies Drexel's civic engagement mission. Our ongoing conversations with these community partners help us understand their most pressing education needs and jointly generate ideas for addressing them. We can then craft a vision with these partners that brings to bear SoE and Drexel expertise and sets an ambitious agenda to guide our support for high-quality pedagogy and educational innovation in the schools and groundbreaking research and practice among SoE faculty and students. Collectively, we will explore solutions that are relevant to urban educational environments locally and can also be brought to scale nationally and globally. The education challenges faced by urban communities are complex and persistent; they will not be solved overnight. However, SoE's commitment is long-term and our support unwavering.

1. Bring SoE's and Drexel's full resources to bear on the challenges of urban education

- Strengthen SoE's internal urban education capacity by:
 - Expanding our degree and program offerings in urban education;
 - Enhancing our undergraduate teacher education programs to create teachers uniquely prepared to address the challenges faced by urban schools; and
 - Strengthening the preparation of our graduate students to become leaders working in and with urban school districts.
- Attract, retain, and develop a faculty and professional staff that works collegially across SoE's programs and departments as well as with colleges, centers, and offices Drexel-wide to create new knowledge about and innovative approaches for teaching and learning in urban areas.
- Identify faculty, students, and professional staff from Drexel's colleges, centers, and offices who are engaged with Philadelphia area schools or involved in research relevant to urban education (including the Center for the Advancement of STEM Teaching and Learning Excellence [CASTLE], the Office of University and Community Partnerships, the ExCITE Center, among others). With them, explore affinities, connections and potential collaborative opportunities that would increase Drexel's impact in urban schools and on research in the field.
- Convene individuals from SoE and Drexel with those at other universities who are focused on urban education to identify areas of common ground and encourage partnerships and collaborations.

2. Leverage the resources and cultural wealth of our surrounding communities

- Engage a wide variety of local schools and community organizations as partners—developing a coordinated strategy for this with Drexel’s Office of University and Community Partnerships and Office of Government and Community Relations.
- Sponsor events, research, and coursework that create dialogue between and among community leaders, community-based organizations and the SoE—building on events such as those of SoE’s *Critical Conversations in Urban Education* series and partnering with the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships, the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement, and other relevant Drexel organizations.
- Engage our region’s education community in an ongoing conversation about its needs and goals that will inform the research and practice SoE undertakes as well as how we prepare teachers and educational leaders.
- Increase the level of SoE research undertaken in collaboration with local school leaders and faculty, the Philadelphia School District, and area community organizations.

3. Establish the *School Work Studio* as a network coordinating all SoE and Drexel research, programs, and initiatives centered on West Philadelphia schools

Drexel students and faculty teach and conduct research in urban environments everywhere; however, we have a particular commitment to our own West Philadelphia neighborhood. The School Work Studio (SWS) will:

- Support the University’s ongoing work in the community by coordinating SoE’s efforts with those of the Office University and Community Partnerships, programs in CASTLE and the College of Arts & Sciences, and others at Drexel to amplify their impact.
- Create, in concert with other Drexel colleges and the West Philadelphia schools, a center for education leadership that explores leadership and decision-making in a multitude of disciplines, organizations, sectors, and environments and develops and tests new approaches to building strong and sustained education leadership.
- Establish a “grow your own” program to identify Philadelphia high school students with an interest in teaching, nurture their interest, and create a pathway for them through SoE and into teacher positions in Drexel-assisted schools in the Philadelphia area.
- Connect school-district leaders with SoE students who can analyze and interpret student data from the district and assist in the development of evidence-based intervention programs.

- Identify, support, and promote an ambitious SoE research agenda based upon the work of Drexel students and faculty in the local schools. Build a network among local teachers and school leaders that will connect community education needs to SoE faculty and doctoral students with relevant research interests.

II. A Crucible for Pedagogical Innovation

The approaches, tools and spaces we used for learning fifty years ago are not those we need for effective learning today and in the foreseeable future. Rapid and easy access to massive amounts of information, expanded understanding of the fluid and lifelong development of the human mind, and new awareness of the power of collaborative learning (e.g., social cognition) are pushing us to imagine new methods, tools and environments for foundational and lifelong learning. In response, SoE will develop an interdisciplinary, collaborative, high-tech space that serves as a catalyst for innovative research and practice in teaching and learning—a place that guides learners towards complex thinking and employs technology in novel, pedagogically sound, and effective ways.

1. Create the *Messy Cognition Lab*

Recognizing the non-linear nature of the development of complex thinking—and the beauty and power of productive failure—SoE will introduce the *Messy Cognition Lab*. This will be a state-of-the-art physical and virtual facility championing the idea that the development of tools for rich, interdisciplinary and conceptual learning does not happen in a linear or even a predictable manner. The Lab will foster collaborative and individual work designing, testing, creating, and sharing pedagogical innovations for learning in formal and informal settings.

- Create a physical space within the School of Education in which we will explore adaptations for traditional-style classrooms; develop new teaching and learning environments; and provide areas for development, prototyping, and testing of pedagogical products and processes.
- Serve as an incubator in which to develop new knowledge and learning technologies that inform teaching; advance deeper learning principles and designs; enhance educational leadership; translate knowledge into tangible practices, tools, and policies; foster interdisciplinary partnerships; test new products and approaches and analyze empirical information about them to inform the education field.
- Establish monthly forums for sharing mid-development pedagogical innovations, including emerging technology tools for teaching and learning.
- Support interdisciplinary research across many colleges at Drexel and other organizations, including Philadelphia-based public and private schools, informal education organizations such as museums and zoos, educational non-profits, and others interested in emerging education ideas and resources.

- Collaborate with Drexel’s ExCITe Center as an “education partner,” helping to develop connections among Drexel’s programs in STEM, arts and humanities fields to improve STEAM education from pre-K through college.

2. Build a three-school *Education Campus* on the former University City High School site, collocating SoE, a Philadelphia public elementary school and a middle school Building on Drexel’s deep ties with West Philadelphia, the Education Campus will bring together SoE’s expertise with the goals of local school principals and the district administration to expand the education vision for our neighborhood’s schools. The new Campus will increase opportunities for apprenticeships and mentoring, stimulate development of innovative pedagogical resources tools, and encourage interweaving of state-of-the-art ideas in creativity with best practices in preK-8 public-school teaching and learning. These opportunities and resources will benefit the School of Education and other Drexel University students, faculty and professional staff as well as the preK-8 students, faculty, families, and school leaders associated with the Education Campus. More specifically, the Campus will:

- Provide School District of Philadelphia students, teachers, families and leaders with opportunities to teach and learn using new ideas and practices emerging from research by SoE and other Drexel partners merged with best practices in teaching and learning.
- Meet the schools’ needs for greater numbers of teachers and aides as well as more accessible training for principals and assistant principals. Increase opportunities for hands-on classroom experience for SoE students, particularly early in their academic programs.
- Support grant writing and other forms of resource generation for the schools at a time when the financial support of Philadelphia public schools is uncertain.
- Provide a central home for the people and activities of the School of Education and provide a symbiotic education community organized around high-quality preK-8 and higher education.

III. An Innovator in Lifelong and Life-Wide Learning

As lifespans continue to increase and more people seek education outside traditional modes of delivery, lifelong and life-wide education will become increasingly important, requiring attention to more than formal preK-16 schooling. Our focus must be on a much longer “education pipeline,” one that includes family needs and interactions from birth to preschool, ongoing professional development for job and career success, and avocational and personal exploration following retirement. Of equal importance is where and how people learn “life-wide”; that is, across a range of formal and informal experiences in a variety of settings, including home, museums and other cultural spaces, athletics, political involvement, workplaces, among others.

SoE will link its expertise with that of Drexel's other colleges, centers and offices to make the University a resource for the study and practice of teaching and learning in lifelong and life-wide contexts and the application of technology to enhance and expand opportunities in both areas.

1. Expand SoE programs and research on adult learners and about lifelong and life-wide education

Drexel has set an institutional goal of ensuring that the people of our neighborhoods are well-prepared for the demands of the 21st century economy and that, through programs like Philadelphia's [Digital On-Ramps](#), adults can obtain the skills they need for jobs and careers. SoE will expand its research on adult learning and work with Drexel partners like the Goodwin School of Professional Studies and the Office of University and Community Partnerships in the development, design and testing of new programs and services for adult learners.

- Develop models for non-degree programs that provide skills and training to adults in response to the needs of employers and offer reliable certification other than a traditional academic degree.
- Provide research, development, and testing of innovative credentialing approaches that will be especially applicable to lifelong and life-wide learners, as well as to employers looking for evidence of the capabilities of potential employees with non-traditional education experiences.
- Establish partnerships among Drexel's Center for Labor Markets and Policy, the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement and the School of Education's *Critical Conversations in Urban Education* to offer thought leadership and public events relating to workforce development.
- Work with the LeBow College of Business, the Steinbright Career Development Center, the Lindy Center, the Dornsife Center, and others at Drexel to develop and/or expand:
 - Career-counseling and professional development services for adults who are exploring new career and technical skills.
 - Partnerships with corporate, public, and nonprofit employers as well as area school districts looking for innovative ways to provide ongoing training and professional development for employees.
- Establish and implement high-quality school leadership training through executive weekends for school leaders (principals, assistant principals, etc.).
- Create high-quality informal learning opportunities outside of traditional educational institutions through partnerships with organizations such as area museums, performing arts centers, historical associations, and the like.

2. Establish SoE as a resource for sustaining Drexel's leadership position in online education and technology-enabled learning

Drexel has been a leader in online education as a result of its early adoption of technology-enhanced education for working adults, SoE's successful expansion of research and practice in online teaching and learning, and the extensive programming offered through Drexel University Online (DUO) and several Drexel colleges. As the market for online learning becomes more competitive, SoE will aid the University in maintaining its leadership position by bringing SoE's expertise in online pedagogy, assessment, instruction design, and curricula together with the talents and experiences of DUO and the colleges.

- Work with Drexel's colleges, centers, and offices to develop and test innovative new approaches to online instruction and technology-enabled learning suited to different disciplines, content matter, learners, and pedagogical approaches.
- Collaborate with the College of Engineering, College of Computing and Informatics, the ExCITE Center, as well as related schools and departments, to explore the design and application of new technologies in diverse teaching and learning settings, including online, in-person, and hybrid programs.
- Working with DUO and Drexel colleges experienced in online education, become the architects of professional development for Drexel faculty in online learning, and over time become a provider of such programs to outside institutions, organizations, and businesses.

Enabling Our Goals: A Strong and Sustainable Resource Base

To support our achievement of the preceding strategic goals and to develop a strong foundation for the School in the coming years and into its future, we will:

1. Grow our operating resources and financial assets

- Expand SoE's relationships with philanthropic organizations, government agencies, and corporate funders in order to identify grant opportunities that support innovative research and practice in education.
- Identify opportunities to monetize the commercial value of educational products, programs, tools, services and intellectual property developed by SoE.
- Engage SoE alumni more strongly with the School to increase their fundraising potential. Enlarge the pool of other prospective donors and engage them in strengthening the College's financial foundation.
- Work with University Advancement to explore the potential for building an endowment for SoE that would support student financial assistance, faculty research, and the School's collaborative initiatives with the West Philadelphia schools.

2. Strengthen SoE's physical infrastructure and reputation

- Establish a new "education campus," including a new SoE building, on the former University City High School site.
- Achieve accreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation CAEP.
- Encourage global research and education experiences (*e.g.*, Fulbright Fellowships, "global classrooms," etc.).
- Enhance our computing infrastructure, capabilities, and support.
- Provide greater support for faculty and student research and publication.

3. Recruit and hire outstanding faculty, professional staff and students

- Develop staffing plans for the *School Work Studio* and the *Messy Cognition Lab* that consider hiring new director(s), rotating leadership roles among faculty, and providing support from graduate students.
- Develop a hiring plan to support CAEP accreditation.

- Work with the University's Enrollment Management team to develop an enrollment plan focused strengthening the academic profile of SoE students and providing modest growth in their number.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Now our real work begins. With the conclusion of this strategic plan, we must transform how we work day-to-day in our programs, research, infrastructure and relationships. These changes will lead SoE to our new vision: a school of education that is among the most civically-engaged and practice-centered in the nation—one built on application, alliances and innovation.

To achieve this vision, we commit to becoming: A National Leader in Urban Education; A Crucible for Pedagogical Innovation; and An Innovator in Lifelong and Life-Wide Learning. We will enable these three goals by working to ensure A Strong and Sustainable Resource Base for SoE. By achieving these goals, we will move our School to an entirely new level of accomplishment and recognition.

Several steps are critical to realizing our vision. These include:

- Developing a plan for implementation and performance-measurement that addresses how we will operationalize each of the initiatives identified in this strategic plan and how we will measure our progress in achieving them.
- Communicating our vision for SoE and our plans to achieve it to stakeholders inside the School; among other Drexel colleges, centers, and office; and to our community partners.
- Reviewing and updating the SoE website and other marketing and communication materials to reflect the vision and goals of our strategic plan.
- Annually, putting together a brief summary of the status of the SoE plan, noting progress on each initiative, identifying new opportunities and changed circumstances, and outlining steps to respond to such changes.
- At the midpoint of the term of this strategic plan (roughly, early in calendar 2019), undertaking a more comprehensive review of progress in meeting the goals of the plan. The term of the current Drexel University Strategic Plan will come to a close at the end of 2019. The mid-point review of the SoE strategic plan is thus an opportune moment to consider the evolving direction of the University and what modifications that may suggest for SoE's plan.

Appendix I

Membership of the School of Education Strategic Planning Committee

The dedicated work of the following members of the School of Education drove the development of the strategic plan.

Nancy Songer - *Dean*

Rajashi Ghosh - *Assistant Professor; Human Resource Development*

Allen Grant - *Department Head; Policy, Organization and Leadership*

Mary Jo Grdina - *Department Head; Teaching, Learning and Curriculum*

Dom Gullo - *Associate Dean of Research*

Penny Hammrich - *Associate Dean of Graduate Studies*

Erin Horvat - *Associate Dean of Academic Affairs*

Seth Jackobsen - *Graduate Student*

Kristine Lewis-Grant - *Associate Clinical Professor*

Sherri Manson - *Program Administrator and Assistant to the Associate Deans*

Consulting Assistance

John Braunstein, *Director, AKA/Strategy*

Appendix II

External Reviewers of the School of Education Strategic Plan

We are grateful to the following individuals for the time they took to review drafts of the strategic plan and offer thoughtful comments and suggestions.

James Herbert, *Dean, Graduate College and Executive Vice Provost*

Lucy Kerman, *Senior Vice Provost, University and Community Partnerships*

Youngmoo Kim, *Associate Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Director of the Expressive & Creative Interaction Technologies (ExCITe) Center*

Donna Murasko, *Dean, College of Arts and Sciences*

Janet Fleetwood, *Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives*