

Drexel 2030 Team Guide

Initiative Team: Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning

Impact

Since its founding, Drexel’s distinctive fusion of experiential learning, research, and scholarship has prepared students of all backgrounds to face the world’s challenges with creativity and a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. Central to Drexel’s history is the University’s relationship with industry partners – most notably through its’ 100-year-old Co-op Program. These industry partners have not only provided invaluable experiential learning opportunities for Drexel students, but their insight has helped to shape and guide the University’s curriculum to best prepare students with the skillsets they will need for success in an ever-changing workforce.

In the coming decade, Drexel will build upon this heritage of collaboration to respond both to profound shifts in higher education and to the broader challenges facing society, which include the fault lines around inequity, systemic racial injustice, and economic uncertainty exposed by a global public health crisis.

In addition to these challenges, technological disruption has quickly become a catalyst for industry seeking ways in which they can strengthen and upskill their current workforces. Simultaneously, the individual worker is finding themselves in need of continual training that is more flexible and interdisciplinary in order to remain competitive in ever-changing environments.

Continuing to build strong relationships with industry will be imperative for Drexel University’s success moving forward. From a continuing education perspective, industry partnership will enable us to examine how best we meet the challenges of training the current workforce and best prepare our students. By engaging with industry through continuing education, the University will also be able to strategically align the educational offerings with the skills vital to our industry partners and their workers.

Institutions of higher education are under pressure today to evaluate and restructure their educational programs to best meet the needs of a diverse student population and their industry partners who are seeking solutions to address skill gaps in their current workforce while also hiring a more interdisciplinary-skilled talent pool.

By re-imagining continuing education and how Drexel can best assist the Lifelong Learner, the University will ensure students of all ages are properly prepared to enter and advance in today’s changing workforce.

This plan articulates strategies for more effectively and intentionally uniting our academic and scholarly enterprise to meet the needs of the rapidly changing work environment that our students will encounter, whether for the first time, or as lifelong learners.



Drexel 2030: Designing the Future is the University-wide implementation effort to execute the goals of Drexel’s Strategic Plan 2030. Comprised of 12 initiative teams, a wide group of faculty, staff, and senior administrators from across the institution will focus on efforts such as retention and student success, pricing and financial aid, program/curricular innovation, online and continuing education/lifelong learning as well as strategic partnerships with industry.

Spanning across these initiatives, 9 integration teams will connect these various efforts and infuse core imperatives such as a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion into each of the initiatives. Each team will drive success through an implementation plan consisting of initiatives, milestones, and financial and non-financial targets that integrate with one another and to the broader strategic plan.

These wide-ranging implementation efforts will be regularly communicated to the Drexel community. The objective is to engage all stakeholders and provide feedback to facilitate continuous development and improvement of the implementation plans.

Taken together, these implementation efforts when synergistic with University’s Strategic 2030 plan will transform Drexel University thereby moving it forward to 2030.



Of these 12 initiatives, the Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning workstream will need to span across the University’s various imperatives including research, partnerships, student empowerment, DEI, adaptable curricula, and learning experiences. As such, the progress made by the Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning workstream will accelerate success of the other workstreams, as well.

Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning Background

Drexel University can derive strength and learning from its’ more than 20 years of experience in creating custom, corporate training through LeBow College of Business, as well as designing and delivering degree completion programming through Goodwin College. Unlike most traditional continuing education programs,

Drexel's current expertise lies in creating customized training programs or education solutions designed through deep understanding of industry needs.

As Drexel looks ahead to the future, the needs of the University (as well as our students and corporate partners) will change, and we must be prepared to meet these new needs through collaboration and a holistic, solutions-based approach.

Academic programs will need to be constantly assessed and monitored to ensure that they are designed to better align with the changing needs of industry partners and the individual, lifelong learner.

In 2019, Drexel University launched the Drexel Solutions Institute to operate as a centralized hub for academic-industry collaborations to create more strategic and interdisciplinary approaches to corporate partnerships. DSI could serve as an execution vehicle for promoting continuing education programs with industry.

By re-imagining Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning at Drexel, the University can:

- Inform academic curriculum to better prepare students & create revenue
- Provide industry partners with opportunities to upskill their current workforce, thus improving retention and increase the engagement of their employees for optimal effectiveness
- Provide career development opportunities that are adaptive and interdisciplinary to meet the needs of various individuals and their lifelong learner journeys

Creating a centralized continuing education entity will better drive partnership cultivation, program ideation, approval, and implementation of Drexel's continuing education programs, including open enrollment offerings, and customized (credit, non-credit) badges and certification programs.

A centralized entity will also assist in establishing consistent pricing, length, and content of programs. In addition, a centralized unit will act as a curator for best practices on program design based on partner feedback, and will manage the client relationships on behalf of Drexel University.

A centralized approach as to how the University engages with industry and forms partnerships to best understand their training needs will enable Drexel to integrate the continuing education opportunities offered by the University's schools, colleges, and innovation units. Consequently, offered programs will be more aligned with Drexel's Strategic Plan and are likely to have a greater impact for the clients, and lifelong learners.

This Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning workstream will aim to identify ways in which Drexel can further expand upon its' current program offerings as well as find ways in which we can build and bridge current opportunities to become more impactful and interdisciplinary to meet the ever-changing needs and interests of our partners, students, and their employers.

Charge

The Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning workstream will strive to:

- Create a centralized infrastructure which will allow for innovative design, creation, and launch of new programs

- Find strategic ways by which the University could increase its Badges & Certificate programs to be more interdisciplinary and innovative to meet the needs of today's workforce and strengthen the University's regional, national, and global reputation
- Utilize industry partnerships to develop professional learning opportunities that not only align with the organizations' needs but are also innovative and lineup with the latest industry trends

Recommendations should:

- ✓ Align with Drexel's mission
- ✓ Connect to the [Drexel 2030 Strategic Plan](#)
- ✓ Create sustained financial impact
- ✓ Drive continued experiential learning opportunities for students
- ✓ Be feasible for near-term implementation

3-Month Goals

Recommendations developed by the Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning workstream should support progress toward the following goals:

- Create a University-level brand for continuing education that will highlight Drexel's value proposition, is diverse in categories and options (including continuing education, undergraduate/graduate, and credit/non-credit levels), and is accurate in pricing.
- Create a business plan to centralize CELL (Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning) that will also ensure consistency with the financial goals of the University and its various Schools and Colleges.
- Suggest which centralized resources should be created in order to provide consistency across the University including:
 - The formation of an interdisciplinary sales/business development team
 - The formation of an instructional design team
 - The formation of a technical and delivery support team
 - The creation and implementation of standardized partnership agreements
 - The creation and implementation of standardized invoicing for programs
 - The creation and implementation of standardize course options



Questions for Consideration

The purpose of this workstream is to create opportunities for building a collaborative approach across participating units and for innovative thinking. A set of initial questions has been drafted to stimulate and initiate conversation.

Please note: The following questions are by no means comprehensive. Additional questions may be added by the team to create a comprehensive assessment.

Deepening Interdisciplinary Education:

- How do we expand current curriculum to make it more interdisciplinary?
- What opportunities might be available in the future to expand our current curriculum across Drexel units?
- What is currently hindering units from collaborating and how can we best assist/support such collaborations?

Strengthening Educational Offerings for the Lifelong Learner:

- What is Drexel's role in educating lifelong learners and industry partners?
- What are the short-term (current) and long-term (future) opportunities for Drexel to create impact?

- What programming is today's Lifelong Learner in need of? Is Drexel able to deliver this programming and, if so, how?
- How can we better partner with industry to understand the needs of today's worker/ lifelong learner?

Expanding Educational Opportunities:

- What educational opportunities are available for immediate expansion?
- What educational opportunities should we plan to expand further in the future?
- What infrastructure/process is needed to provide such expansion?
- How can we best communicate to internal units in a way that promotes and encourages these interdisciplinary expansions?

Identify Innovative Training Solutions:

- How do we define "innovative continuing education and training" at Drexel University? What will differentiate our innovative continuing education from others in the field?
- What will innovative continuing education and training look in the next year? In the next 5 years?
- What University strengths will enable innovative training solutions?
- What weaknesses or issues are likely to hinder innovative training solutions to be offered by Drexel University? If so, how do we address these issues?

Ongoing Questions for Consideration:

- What current and prospective resources at Drexel University will build a sustainable enterprise of education, scholarship, and collaborations?
- What synergies with industry partners are needed for Drexel to achieve the University Strategic Plan 2030's vision?
- How can continuing education drive revenues that will exceed the necessary investments?
- How does continuing education enable the delivery of impactful student experiences and enhance student retention and graduation?
- How can implementation of innovative education proposals be accelerated to shorten the time to impact?
- What are strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities offered by a centralized vs. a decentralized continuing education and lifelong learning unit.

Sample of the Workstream's Values

We have included some of the initial, key values below. All members of this workstream are urged to adhere to these values throughout their time on the Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning workstream.

Please note that these are initial key values and that the Committee Chairs could update these values as they deem fit.



Collaboration



Trust



Commitment/dedication



Problem-solving



Engagement/enthusiasm



Innovation

Timeline

- March/April 2021: Launch of Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning Workstream; Bi- Monthly meetings to occur to properly outline initiatives and develop systems for next steps
- June/July 2021: 3-month update in which the Chairs will present a structure and model to leadership
- September/October 2021: Mid-year fall check-in with leadership in which the Chairs will share updates on the launch of the hub and will review progress
- March 2022: Year 1 check-in to regroup the team to further assess progress and outline the necessary next steps