

DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Health Equity and the Anchor Mission

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DREXEL'S ANCHOR MISSION: COLLABORATIVE TRANSFORMATION

Drexel has embraced an outward-looking mission to engage thoughtfully with neighboring communities in ways that transform how the university educates and operates.



Incorporating the needs and interests of campus neighbors into our academic mission, business operations, and volunteer power is at the core of what it means to be an institution of higher education.

DREXEL'S THREE DIMENSIONS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: A PLACE-BASED STRATEGY

Student and Employee Volunteerism

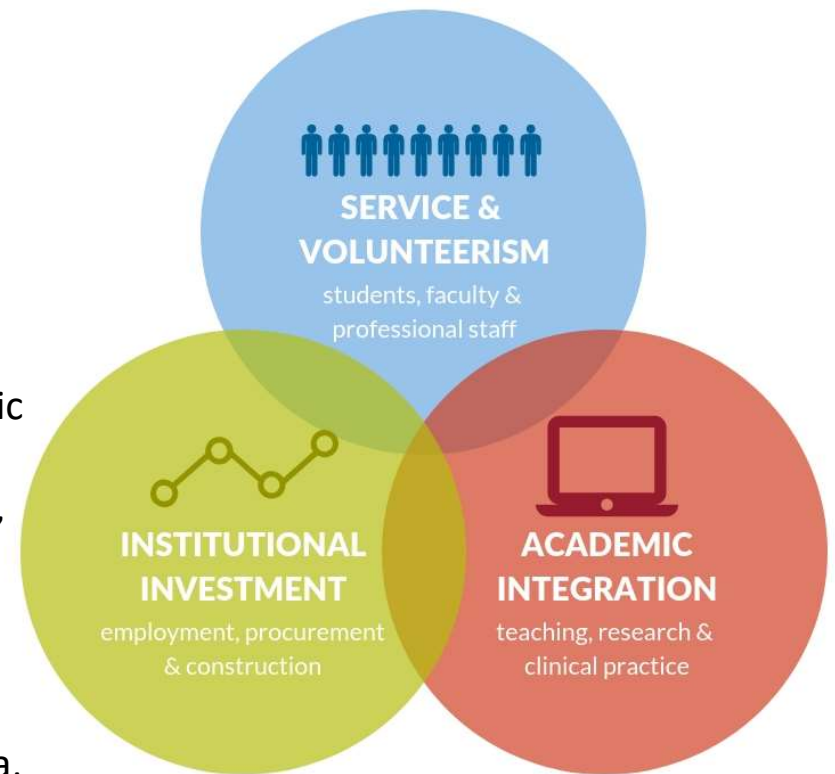
Through the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement, Drexel offers high-quality, community-based volunteer opportunities open to all Drexel students, faculty and professional staff.

Academic Integration

Our faculty explicitly integrate civic engagement into research, coursework and clinical practice. Our academic programs allow our students to solve problems on the ground, interacting with residents, neighboring schools, community service agencies, and local businesses.

Institutionally Supported Neighborhood Investment

Drexel acts as an anchor institution in West Philadelphia, investing in the community through hiring and procurement, and supporting initiatives to improve economic opportunity and inclusion in the surrounding neighborhoods.



THE ANCHOR MISSION AND HEALTH INITIATIVES ON THE GROUND

- ✓ Through ongoing stakeholder-driven planning, the **Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships** has incorporated health and wellness into its programming from the beginning.
- ✓ The 18-month community planning process for the **College of Nursing & Health Professions' Community Wellness HUB** – housed at the Dornsife Center – gave us a solid baseline of how the community thinks about its health priorities, and is now serving residents five days a week.



THE ANCHOR MISSION AND HEALTH INITIATIVES ON THE GROUND



- ✓ The **West Philadelphia Promise Neighborhood** initiative is working to improve children's access to safe playtime in the neighborhood, and to help families get better access to healthcare services. The associated neighborhood survey process is building a wealth of data on local education and health outcomes indicators.
- ✓ **Healthy homes collaborations:** Faculty in architecture and public health are collaborating with partners like Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Local Initiatives Support Corporation on interventions including home renovation to address lead exposure, asthma triggers, stress, fall risks, and aging in place, linking health with the neighborhood's built environment.

ANCHOR MISSION CHALLENGES

- ✓ There is a tension between the slow-moving process of participatory planning and funders' expectations to see results quickly – but working slowly and deliberately is also an important way to build trust.
- ✓ It can feel risky to share decision making power with people and organizations outside the institution – but incorporating community interests and ambitions in our programming is how we ensure participation.
- ✓ Contested notions of expertise can get in the way – but increasingly our students cite their experiences with non-credentialed community residents as some of their richest learning experiences.

THERE ARE PAYOFFS TO MAKING THIS COMMITMENT...

Responding to community ambition and interest has upped our game: as an institution that values experiential learning, becoming partners with our neighbors is a challenge that enriches us and strengthens the student learning experience.

OUTCOMES AND MUTUAL BENEFIT

- ✓ We can't make any claims on moving population-level health indicators but we know that the **health circumstances of individual neighborhood residents are changing** as a result of the work we are doing.
- ✓ **What has changed substantially is the relationship between Drexel and its neighbors.** As a result of consistent and careful work and planning to create the Dornsife Center, the Community Wellness HUB, and to establish the Promise Neighborhood initiative, we have connected with hundreds of families and there is a great deal more trust and ready collaboration in these relationships.
- ✓ Student surveys show that students increasingly name Drexel's commitment to an anchor mission and comprehensive civic engagement as one of the most important reasons they choose to attend. We are also attracting junior faculty and academic leadership who are invested in this kind of work. **Looking outwards to community partnerships changes who we are as an institution.**

Thank you!

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