



Dean, Pennsylvania College of Optometry
Salus at Drexel University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

THE SEARCH

The [Pennsylvania College of Optometry \(PCO\)](#) seeks an inspirational, transparent, and empathetic academic executive for the dean position. Founded in 1919, PCO is one of the oldest and most respected optometry schools in the United States. After adding the Osborne College of Audiology and a [College of Health Sciences, Education and Rehabilitation \(CHER\)](#), including a physician assistant program, it founded Salus University in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, in 2008 to accommodate a broad range of health sciences programs. PCO is known for its pioneering clinical education, integrating hands-on patient care early in the curriculum and centered in the community at [The Eye Institute](#) and other clinical sites. The College continues to lead in optometric education, preparing students for evolving roles in primary eye care and advanced medical management of ocular conditions. Salus University, now Salus at Drexel University as part of a merger process, PCO is set to become the 17th college of Drexel University, an R1 research institution of over 21,000 students, including over 7,800 graduate students in Philadelphia.

This is an exciting and pivotal time to lead the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO). The next dean has a unique opportunity to drive meaningful impact and transformation at a highly respected institution. The dean will navigate a dynamic landscape in higher education and optometric education, addressing challenges such as sustaining strong enrollment, financial stability, and academic excellence. Following its recent merger with Drexel University, PCO is poised for growth with access to Drexel's vast resources and facilities. This presents distinct opportunities to enhance the curriculum, expand interdisciplinary research, and advance interprofessional clinical care. With deep and lasting connections to the community and a global reach, PCO is well-positioned to strengthen its impact. Now is the moment for a visionary and experienced leader—one with a deep understanding of optometric education, research, and clinical care—to inspire the PCO community and chart a bold path forward.

Reporting to Drexel [Provost Paul Jensen](#), the dean will address key priorities across all mission areas. The dean will focus on enhancing the curriculum to ensure it is comprehensive and current, promoting effective teaching strategies, and equipping students for success on national board exams and in their careers. The dean will link academic programs, clinical care, and research to provide students with

exceptional experiences and advance the field. They will form partnerships with colleagues across Drexel to further interprofessional collaboration. Operationally, the dean will work to streamline processes related to faculty workload and resource allocation. Finally, prioritizing trust and communication with students, faculty, and staff will help cultivate an inclusive and positive environment where discussion is highly valued and continuous improvement is the norm.

The successful candidate will possess a strong background in academia with a strong preference for experience with optometric education and leadership of the optometric profession. The dean will be an effective communicator, an excellent relationship builder, and a leader who energetically pursues opportunities that advance PCO's impact and excellence. They will be a thoughtful and decisive leader who can navigate complex organizational structures, particularly during the ongoing merger with Drexel, and execute a strategic plan that ensures robust student enrollment, strong board scores, and a sense of belonging and pride in the PCO community. Additionally, they will actively engage with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and supporters.

Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, has been retained to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be submitted in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document before the addendum.

MERGER: SALUS AND DREXEL UNIVERSITIES

In June 2024, Drexel University and Salus University completed the first phase of a [major merger](#), following formal approval by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. This partnership represents a strategic effort to strengthen health sciences education, broaden interdisciplinary research opportunities, and enhance financial sustainability for both institutions. The merger is widely viewed as a forward-looking move to leverage the strengths of both institutions, expand academic offerings, and ensure long-term competitiveness in health education and clinical services.

The integration has two phases. The first phase, finalized on June 30, 2024, placed Salus under Drexel's control while allowing Salus to continue operating as a separate, degree-granting institution. The second phase, which is expected to be completed around July 1, 2025, is contingent on U.S. Department of Education approval. In this phase, Salus will fully merge into Drexel, with many of its programs integrating into Drexel's College of Nursing and Health Professions or College of Medicine. The Pennsylvania College of Optometry—one of Salus's flagship schools—will become a standalone college within Drexel University with the dean reporting directly to the provost.

The merger is part of Drexel's larger vision to build out Drexel Health, a new initiative designed to integrate all healthcare-related academic and clinical entities. This initiative is intended to foster collaborative research, improve interprofessional education, and enhance patient care services across Drexel's growing health sciences footprint. More information on Drexel Health can be found below.

DREXEL HEALTH

Drexel Health serves as the overarching entity for health sciences education, training, research, and patient care at Drexel University. It aims to foster collaboration among various academic units, including the College of Medicine, College of Nursing and Health Professions, Dornsife School of Public Health, AJ Drexel Autism Institute, and Pennsylvania College of Optometry. The initiative is structured in two main phases: the first focuses on clinical integration, which seeks to centralize administrative functions and improve operational efficiency across diverse clinical practices, thereby addressing historical fragmentation within the university's healthcare services. The second phase emphasizes academic integration, aiming to develop a unified curriculum that enhances interprofessional education and supports health sciences research. Overall, Drexel Health represents a strategic effort to align clinical operations with educational programs, ultimately enhancing the quality of healthcare delivery and workforce training.

ABOUT THE PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

The Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO), now part of Salus University, was founded in 1919 and is one of the oldest optometry schools in the United States. It offers a Doctor of Optometry (OD) degree (traditional and accelerated), a post-baccalaureate program in health sciences, and several residency programs in specialized areas such as ocular disease, cornea and contact lenses, vision rehabilitation, and pediatric optometry. PCO's curriculum blends academic rigor with hands-on clinical training, preparing students for success in the optometric field. A hallmark of PCO is The Eye Institute, which serves as the primary clinical training site for students.

Academic Divisions and Programs

PCO offers a comprehensive suite of academic programs designed to prepare future leaders in optometric education, clinical practice, and vision science research. The College's flagship offering is the [Doctor of Optometry \(OD\) program](#), which emphasizes early clinical engagement, evidence-based care, and progressive competency development. In addition to the traditional four-year curriculum, PCO offers a unique [Accelerated Scholars Program](#), enabling academically exceptional students to complete the degree in three years through an intensive, academic, and clinically focused pathway. The College traditionally enrolls 130-150 students annually in its OD programs, with a focus on producing graduates who are well-equipped to meet the demands of modern optometry.

Recognizing the global nature of the profession, PCO also administers the [Advanced Placement Doctor of Optometry degree \(APOD\)](#). This program is designed for internationally trained optometrists who wish to practice in the United States. Through a combination of advanced academic coursework and supervised clinical training, APOD graduates meet the requirements for U.S. licensure while gaining familiarity with the standards and expectations of American optometric practice.

For those seeking post-graduate clinical specialization, PCO offers a robust portfolio of residency programs. These residencies span multiple subspecialties, including cornea and contact lens care, ocular disease, pediatric optometry, primary eye care, and vision rehabilitation. The residency programs are structured to advance clinical acumen and scholarly inquiry while fostering professional leadership in the delivery of advanced optometric care. The majority of the residency programs are one-year in duration with the exception of the [Neuro-Ophthalmic Disease Residency](#), which is a two-year program designed to provide advanced clinical training for optometrists in diagnosing and managing neuro-ophthalmic conditions.

PCO is proud to offer a competitive 30-week [Traditional Post-baccalaureate Program in Health Sciences](#) which develops scientific skills and foundational knowledge in basic health professions sciences while also exposing students to patient care experiences in a variety of settings and disciplines. This program offers students interested in pursuing a graduate or professional degree in the health sciences the opportunity to strengthen their scientific background.

Finally, PCO maintains a strong commitment to lifelong learning through a diverse offering of continuing education (CE) programs. These CE opportunities are widely recognized for their depth and relevance, offering practicing optometrists access to current clinical guidelines, innovations in contact lens technology, and emerging best practices in disease management and clinical diagnostics.

[The Eye Institute](#)

All programs benefit from access to The Eye Institute (TEI), PCO's principal clinical training facility and one of the most comprehensive optometric teaching clinics in the nation. It is a state-of-the-art facility with over 65 exam lanes, the most current diagnostic instrumentation available, and a large empathetic support staff. TEI provides a comprehensive range of primary and specialty eye care services, including pediatric vision care, vision therapy, ocular disease management, contact lenses, low vision rehabilitation, disability services, community screenings, mobile exam unit, and emergency care. By the middle of their second year, students are integrated into The Eye Institute as full participants in the service delivery system, which manages 40,000 annual patient visits. Through TEI, students and residents engage in high-volume, diverse patient care experiences that are integral to clinical skill development and interprofessional collaboration. In addition to its educational mission, TEI supports clinical research and innovation in fields such as glaucoma, dry eye, and pediatric vision development. Community engagement remains central, with TEI offering vision screenings and public health initiatives across the Philadelphia region. The Eye Institute also houses a Primary Healthcare clinic currently owned by Oak Street Health.

Research

The research enterprise at PCO is focused on advancing vision science and improving clinical care through faculty-led research, student involvement, and collaboration with industry and healthcare partners. In

FY24, PCO secured \$1,962,746.56 through 43 grants. Key research areas include ocular disease (such as glaucoma and dry eye), contact lens technology, pediatric vision development, low vision rehabilitation, and public health and health disparities. Among National Eye Institute-funded studies on campus, PCO was a site for the Ocular Hypertension Treatment Study, the Convergence Insufficiency Treatment Trial, over 20 Pediatric Eye Disease Investigator Group Clinical Trials, the Vision in Preschoolers Study, and Dr. Alex Dizhoor's lab for retinal genetics and cell physiology. In addition, PCO has had many industry-supported research in pharmacology. Research is often applied, with studies aimed at improving patient outcomes, treatment protocols, and diagnostic methods. Students and residents are encouraged to engage in research, gaining valuable experience in evidence-based practice and scholarly presentation. PCO faculty contribute to the field through publications, conference presentations, and the development of clinical guidelines.

Faculty, Professional Staff, and Students

PCO is home to 52 full-time faculty, 7 part-time faculty, and 7 staff who are strongly committed to providing an excellent education and experience to all students. The college's total enrollment is approximately 600 students. The Eye Institute employs 58 administrative and front-line operations staff.

Finances

The dean oversees an operating budget of \$28M in coordination with the provost. PCO revenues come from the following principal sources: degree and certificate program tuition and fees, sponsored research contracts and grants, gifts and endowment payouts, and other miscellaneous income.

Alumni and Development

PCO benefits significantly from the support of its alumni, who are deeply engaged through the [Office of Alumni Relations](#). Alumni support the professional development of PCO students by offering career advice and professional opportunities, continuing education programs, and mentoring current students. These efforts help bridge the gap between education and practice while strengthening the College's mission and fostering lifelong relationships between alumni and the institution.

Alumni have provided generous financial support to PCO over the years. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, donor-restricted endowment funds amounted to approximately \$5.54 million, with a total endowment of about \$13 million, primarily sourced from alumni donations. These funds support scholarships, research, and program development, with endowed scholarships requiring a minimum contribution of \$25,000 to ensure perpetual support for students. Annual giving campaigns further encourage alumni to contribute to the University Fund or specific programs, providing essential operating support beyond tuition revenues.

ROLE OF THE DEAN OF THE PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

The dean is responsible for PCO's strategic, research, academic, clinical, and business affairs. The dean will set and implement a strategy that ensures the vitality and long-term success of the College. They will:

- Partner with key internal and external constituents
- Foster interprofessional opportunities
- Lead faculty through curricular evolution and program development
- Make savvy budgetary and resource allocation decisions
- Sustain strong enrollment
- Facilitate innovation in student success
- Hire exceptional faculty and staff; and
- Participate in philanthropic and outreach activities.

Current direct reports to the dean include the associate dean of optometric clinical affairs, associate dean of optometric academic affairs, senior associate dean of research, executive director of finance, alumni engagement personnel, an educational program manager, and an executive assistant.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE DEAN

It is expected that the next dean will have the ability to address a set of opportunities and challenges that include, but are not limited to:

Champion Academic Rigor and Strong Performance on Board Exams

The dean will be a champion of quality and student success, committed to building an academically stimulating environment with high standards where students can thrive. The dean will work with faculty to adjust curriculum and pedagogy and enhance support systems to ensure the best outcomes, including strong performance on national board exams. This individual will work collaboratively with faculty to create a balanced and efficient curriculum that addresses all essential areas of optometry without being overloaded.

Ensure Excellent and Innovative Academic Programs with Robust Enrollment

As the number of optometry schools in the U.S. has grown over the past two decades, increasing the availability of seats, some institutions have faced challenges in maintaining steady application numbers. This reflects both heightened competition among schools and a stagnant applicant pool. In this competitive landscape for students and faculty, the dean must identify PCO's key differentiators, attract students, and position graduates for workplace success. The dean will be a strategic, adaptable leader with a deep understanding of optometric education and the professional environment in which PCO graduates will work. Throughout this effort, the dean will ensure that PCO's educational programs

integrate the latest advancements in optometric science, address the needs of an evolving healthcare system, and serve the demands of a diverse population. The dean will work to leverage academic assets at Drexel to ensure students have access to all state-of-the-art learning resources on Drexel's main campus.

Strengthen and Sustain a Unified, Cohesive, and Collaborative Culture in the College

The PCO community is tight-knit and supportive. Steady leadership, transparency, and frequent open communication will be vital to the long-term success of PCO and its integration into Drexel. The PCO community has been through significant changes in recent years that have impacted morale and unity. By regularly engaging with all stakeholders, the dean should strive to fortify an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued, heard, and informed. The dean will recognize and leverage the many talents of PCO faculty and staff. The dean will implement structured and authentic communication to ensure that decisions, policies, and expectations are clearly conveyed, including those related to the transition into Drexel.

Nurture Exceptional Relationships with Internal and External Constituents

Collaboration is essential to PCO's success. The dean must be adept at building relationships and solving problems, working closely with faculty, staff, and campus leaders to advance shared priorities and elevate PCO's reputation. Strong partnerships with other colleges and offices at Drexel can foster high-impact interprofessional experiences for students and faculty, provide valuable resources for faculty and staff development, and create pathways from undergraduate programs to PCO—all of which enhance PCO's brand in a competitive market. Additionally, the dean will foster trust with alumni, strengthening connections through clear and meaningful engagement. PCO's longstanding commitment to the neighborhoods around Salus and The Eye Institute must also be upheld and nurtured under the next dean's leadership.

Creatively Introduce New Revenue Streams while Carefully Stewarding Existing Resources

The dean will adeptly maximize current assets and seek ways to grow resources that are sustainable and in line with PCO's goals. Fiscally astute and adept at administrative oversight, the dean will also focus on enhancing operational efficiencies and accountability. The dean will have the knowledge and courage to deeply assess PCO and make wise resource allocation decisions. The dean can pursue numerous avenues to grow revenue for PCO, including novel educational offerings, forging new partnerships, and philanthropy. It will be vital for the dean to pursue funding and philanthropic investment to bolster scholarships and financial aid for students as well as provide resources for the education, research, and service missions of PCO.

Recruit, Retain, and Mentor an Inclusive, World-Class Faculty and Staff

PCO's faculty and professional staff are exceptionally dedicated and talented. The dean will drive the recruitment, promotion, and retention of faculty and professional staff who are highly qualified and committed to the College's mission. The dean will champion practices and policies to ensure that faculty

and professional staff reflect the inclusivity of PCO's student body while creating an inclusive environment where all community members feel well-supported and empowered. To be successful, the dean will have exceptional interpersonal and management skills, a passion for mentorship, and a commitment to ensuring a healthy work environment for faculty and professional staff at all levels.

PRINCIPAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Develop and execute a strategic plan to advance PCO's mission, vision, and goals
- Ensure academic excellence and continuous improvement in all programs, including curriculum development, assessment, accreditation compliance, and program evaluation
- Foster innovation in education, clinical training, and research
- Support faculty in advancing teaching methodologies, interprofessional education, research, and clinical training
- Advocate for PCO within the University and broader healthcare communities
- Ensure all requirements for continued accreditation are maintained with the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE)
- Serve as an advocate to support the scope of practice enhancements in Pennsylvania and nationally.
- Recruit, retain, and support a highly qualified faculty and staff
- Foster a culture of collaboration, mentorship, and excellence
- Responsible for the evaluation of recommendations for Optometry faculty promotions and tenure and, in turn, making recommendations to the Provost
- Oversee admissions strategies to attract high-caliber students and ensure retention
- Champion student success by fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment
- Support student professional development, leadership opportunities, and career readiness
- Secure funding and resources to encourage and support faculty and student research initiatives
- Promote interprofessional and collaborative education, research, and practice opportunities for faculty and students
- Responsible for the preparation and performance of students on all parts of the national board examinations offered by the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO)
- Responsible for coordination and evaluation of clinical assignments and outcomes at The Eye Institute (TEI) in collaboration with the appropriate officers and administrators of TEI and the TEI Council
- Maintain and enhance PCO's commitment to community outreach and public service
- Oversee budget development, financial oversight, and planning to ensure fiscal sustainability
- Build and maintain strong relationships with alumni, donors, industry, and clinical partners
- Promote philanthropic initiatives to support scholarships, research, and program development
- Represent PCO at professional organizations, conferences, and public events
- Ensure compliance with accreditation standards and regulatory requirements

- Uphold ethical and professional standards in all academic, clinical, and administrative functions

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The dean will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal characteristics:

- Doctor of Optometry or other closely related doctoral degree. Additional degree(s) in biomedicine, public health, business or education a plus.
- Distinguished record in academic achievement, research, practice, and service; eligible for faculty appointment at PCO.
- Significant and evidenced successful leadership experience in academic administration.
- Proven track record in higher education, including curriculum development, accreditation, and faculty support.
- Ability to develop and operationalize a shared vision and strategic plan.
- Passion for student success, faculty development, and advancing the profession of optometry.
- Adaptability and innovation in responding to challenges and opportunities in healthcare education.
- Commitment to excellence in education, research, and service.
- Strong communication skills and ability to build effective relationships with internal and external constituents including faculty, staff, students, alumni, industry partners, and healthcare organizations.
- Strong financial and operational management skills, including budgeting and resource allocation.
- Decisive and confident leadership with a collaborative approach to decision-making.
- Integrity, professionalism, and a strong ethical foundation in leadership and management.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Applications must include a CV and cover letter. Applications, inquiries, and nominations should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website.

Amy Segal, Partner
Tiffany Weber, Managing Associate
Olivia McVicker, Managing Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

Apply online:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/pennsylvania-college-optometry-salus-drexel-university/dean>

Drexel University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer that welcomes individuals from diverse and neurodiverse backgrounds and perspectives, and believes that an inclusive and respectful environment enriches the University community and the educational and employment experience of its members. The University prohibits discrimination against individuals on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, status as a veteran or special disabled veteran, gender identity or expression, genetic information, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions and any other prohibited characteristic. Please visit our [Policies page](#) to view all University policies related to Human Resources and [News and Announcements](#) for workplace postings.

APPENDIX

ABOUT DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Overview

One of the most innovative and exciting research universities in America today, Drexel University focuses on experiential education and use-inspired research. Drexel strives to enhance regional, national, and global communities through its commitment to civic engagement. There is a "can do" spirit--the result of a culture that has valued innovation and agency throughout its history--that permeates the university. Drexel aspires to be the institution of choice for undergraduates seeking an education based on actual professional experiences, for researchers seeking to join some of the most innovative and successful translational investigators in the nation, and for professional and graduate students and faculty who seek the advantages of its location, approach to engaged learning, and modern campus.

With nearly 21,000 students, Drexel is the 13th largest private, not-for-profit university in the nation. Students come from nearly all 50 U.S. states and more than 100 countries. Building on the university's pioneering efforts in online education that began in 1996, Drexel offers more than 150 [online degree and certificate programs](#) to nearly 4,700 students, using the same accredited curriculum and distinguished faculty as it does on campus. Drexel employs more than 10,000 faculty and professional staff, making the university one of the [top 10 largest employers in Philadelphia](#). The university has more than 175,000 alumni worldwide.

In 2025, Drexel has moved up 47 rank positions since 2021 in the *U.S. News and World Report's* annual college ranking, from 133rd to 86th and as [29th "most innovative."](#) In 2024, Drexel [ranked 54th](#) in the U.S. in the *Wall Street Journal's* list of "2024 Best Colleges in the U.S."

Drexel's recent history includes several major acquisitions and start-ups that have transformed the public face and internal persona of the university. These include the College of Nursing and Health Professions, a school of public health (now the Dornsife School of Public Health), the Academy of Natural Sciences, and the College of Medicine. This expansion was accompanied by educational innovation, significant growth in academic research, including an elevation to R1 status, transformational building and renovation, and the development of the university into a residential campus.

The university is organized into 16 colleges and schools:

- Close School of Entrepreneurship
- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Computing & Informatics
- College of Nursing and Health Professions
- Dornsife School of Public Health
- Drexel University College of Medicine

- College of Engineering
- Goodwin College of Professional Studies
- Graduate College
- LeBow College of Business
- Pennoni Honors College
- Kline School of Law
- School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems
- School of Education
- School of Economics
- Westphal College of Media Arts & Design

Academic Programs

Drexel is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and offers over 100 [undergraduate majors](#) and 100 [accelerated degree programs](#). The university also offers more than 120 [graduate and professional programs](#), including a Doctor of Medicine and a Juris Doctor, and more than 150 post-baccalaureate and post-master's [certificate programs](#).

Cooperative Education

Drexel's cooperative education program for undergraduates is one of the nation's oldest, largest, and most highly regarded. Drexel undergraduate students alternate periods of on-campus (or online) study with full-time employment in related fields. Students can choose from more than 1,600 employers across the United States and in 20 countries that participate consistently in the Drexel [Co-op program](#) or conduct an independent search to secure up to three unique six-month co-ops during their undergraduate experience. Students obtain positions with major corporations such as Amazon, Google, NBC Universal, Lockheed Martin, JP Morgan Chase, Comcast Corporation, Johnson & Johnson, and organizations such as Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, The Academy of Natural Sciences, and Ronald McDonald House, as well as local public schools.

Campuses

Drexel's students are educated at its University City Campus, Center City Campus, Queen Lane Campus, LeBow College of Business Malvern Campus, Salus at Drexel University in Elkins Park, and online. Beginning in 2021, the university also welcomed medical students to the Drexel University College of Medicine at Tower Health in West Reading.

Research

Reflecting an increase in research activity, Drexel's Carnegie Classification went from R2 to R1 in 2018. As one of the 39 private R1 universities, this achievement is the result of a decades-long effort to raise Drexel's research profile. Retaining this status – including active support of a culture of scholarship across

the university – is one of Drexel's main priorities. In the 2023–2024 academic year, Drexel reported research expenditures totaling \$170.2 million.

Students

Drexel students represent a broad range of cultures and backgrounds, unified by the drive and imagination with which they approach their work and their lives. The university has nearly [21,000 students worldwide](#). Drexel's athletic programs and recreational facilities are an essential part of campus life. As a member of the Colonial Athletic Association, Drexel competes at the NCAA Division 1 level in 18 varsity sports.

Finances and Development

The university's latest campaign, [The Future is a Place We Make](#), has raised just over \$800 million as part of its most ambitious fundraising campaign ever.

Drexel has total revenues of \$1.02 billion million and total endowment assets in excess of \$1.008 billion.

Drexel and Philadelphia

With over 100 colleges and universities and 440,000 students, the Philadelphia region has the fourth-largest population of students in the United States. Drexel's 74-acre University City campus is located blocks from the central business district, in Philadelphia's University City neighborhood, which it shares with the University of Pennsylvania and the University of the Sciences to create, in total, a community of over 50,000 students. University City is among the most vibrant, fast-changing urban ecosystems in the United States and contributes to a Drexel University experience that is rich in intellectual, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

Drexel's engagement in its community is long-term, multi-generational, and fundamental to the university's mission, heritage, and future. Indeed, recent outgoing President Fry committed Drexel to becoming "[the most civically engaged university in the United States](#)."

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

President

Political economist and academic Antonio Merlo will become the 16th president of Drexel University on July 1, 2025. Merlo, Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Dean of New York University's Faculty of Arts & Science, will succeed Interim President Denis P. O'Brien. Since 2019, Merlo has led NYU Arts & Science, the university's largest academic unit, comprising three schools and dozens of departments, research centers, institutes, and language and cultural houses. Merlo's career in higher education began at the University

of Minnesota where he joined the faculty in 1992 as an assistant professor with a tenure track appointment. Merlo also spent five years at Rice University, serving as the George A. Peterkin Professor of Economics and chair of the Economics Department, founding director of the Rice Initiative for the Study of Economics and earning an appointment as dean of its School of Social Sciences in 2016. Merlo also developed strong ties to Philadelphia during his academic career, spending 14 years on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania — from 2000 to 2014 — where he was the Lawrence R. Klein Professor of Economics, the chair of the Economics Department, Director of the Penn Institute for Economic Research, a research associate in the Population Studies Center and a member of the advisory board of Penn's Center for Italian Studies. Merlo is a first-generation college graduate. He completed his undergraduate education in 1987, earning a Laurea summa cum laude in economics and social sciences from Bocconi University in Milan, before emigrating to the United States to continue his studies at NYU.

Provost

[Paul Jensen](#) is the Nina Henderson Provost and University Professor at Drexel University. He was previously dean and R. John Chapel, Jr., Dean's Chair of the LeBow College of Business. His primary research areas are in international trade and applied microeconomics. He was on the faculty at LeBow for over 20 years and has held several roles in administration and leadership within Drexel University. He previously served as associate dean for LeBow's graduate and undergraduate programs and the Office for Experiential Learning and was director of LeBow's Ph.D. program and interim director for the Center for Hospitality & Sport Management. Prior to joining LeBow's economics faculty in 1997, Jensen worked as an engineer in the power generation division of General Electric. He received undergraduate degrees in economics and mechanical engineering from Syracuse University and holds a doctorate in economics from Pennsylvania State University.

SALUS UNIVERSITY

Salus University, now integrated with Drexel University, is a private graduate institution located in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, specializing in health science education. Founded in 1919 as the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO), it has evolved over the years to encompass a broader range of health science programs. The university offers a variety of professional and graduate degree programs across its colleges. These include Doctor of Optometry (OD), Doctor of Audiology (AuD), Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies, Master of Science and Doctoral degrees in Occupational Therapy, and Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology. Salus emphasizes interprofessional education and early clinical exposure, ensuring that students gain hands-on experience in their respective fields.

As of the 2024-2025 academic year, Salus University enrolled approximately 600 students with 131 faculty and 274 staff. The University's main campus spans 11.5 acres with a 195,000 square-foot facility in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. Additionally, the Hafter Student Community Center encompasses 30,000 square feet, and The Eye Institute, located on the Oak Lane Campus, covers 70,000 square feet.

Salus is known for its commitment to a primary care philosophy and a holistic approach to patient assessment, focusing on prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. The curriculum incorporates innovative learning strategies such as small group interactions, interactive sessions, and self-directed learning experiences. Furthermore, Salus integrates cutting-edge technologies to prepare students for the evolving demands of their professions.

A video tour of Salus University can be [found here](#).

Elkins Park

Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, is a suburban community located just north of Philadelphia in Montgomery County. Known for its tree-lined streets, historic architecture, and diverse population, the area offers a mix of residential charm and cultural richness. Home to notable landmarks such as the Beth Shalom Synagogue, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and Curtis Hall Arboretum, Elkins Park boasts a blend of historical significance and natural beauty. The community provides convenient access to Philadelphia via regional rail and major roadways, making it an attractive location for professionals, students, and families. With a variety of parks, restaurants, and local businesses, Elkins Park offers a welcoming and vibrant environment for residents and visitors alike.