Search for the Inaugural Dean of the College of Engineering and Computing
Drexel University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

"I know that the world is going to change, and, therefore, the University must change with it." –Anthony J. Drexel

THE SEARCH

Drexel University, a private, comprehensive, and global R1-level research university, seeks a strategic and dynamic leader to serve as the inaugural dean of the College of Engineering and Computing (CoEC or College). This newly formed College unites the School of Engineering, the School of Computer & Information Science, and the School of Biomedical Engineering and Science into a single, forward-looking academic enterprise. This integration is a cornerstone of Drexel's bold Academic Transformation (AT)—a reimagining of the University's entire academic model designed to foster greater flexibility, deeper interdisciplinarity, and a sharper focus on what sets Drexel apart: immersive, high-impact experiential learning and research that drives real-world solutions. By bringing together engineering, computing, and biomedical innovation, the College of Engineering and Computing will unlock powerful new opportunities for discovery, collaboration, and societal impact—breaking down traditional academic boundaries and catalyzing unexpected connections across disciplines, industries, and communities.

Drexel University was founded on the bold vision of Anthony J. Drexel, a pioneering 19th-century financier who believed education should be both excellent and purposeful. At a time when college graduates accounted for less than one percent of the nation's population, Anthony Drexel envisioned an institute that would empower individuals to elevate their lives. "Education at Drexel should not only be good, but be good for something," he once remarked.

Today, Drexel is one of the most innovative and exciting research universities in America and offers powerful learning experiences, including its nationally renowned cooperative education program and community-based learning opportunities, to its nearly 21,200 students, including approximately 7,800 graduate students. With more than 100 undergraduate majors, 120 graduate programs, and 51 doctoral programs across 14 academic colleges, Drexel's academic breadth is matched by the strength of its faculty and staff—over 10,000 faculty and professional staff—who are committed to shaping future leaders and solving society's most pressing challenges. Drexel is one of only 39 private universities designated as an "R1 Doctoral University: Very High Research Activity" by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of

Higher Education. Drexel's externally sponsored research expenditures have increased by 33% over the past five fiscal years, reaching $170.2 million in 2024—a testament to the University's expanding impact and ambition.

Under the bold leadership of its new president, Antonio Merlo, and reporting to Drexel Provost Paul Jensen, the incoming dean of the College of Engineering and Computing will oversee Drexel's largest College, aligning it with major university initiatives as listed in Drexel's strategic plan, Drexel 2030. The dean will provide visionary leadership, inspiring cross-disciplinary collaboration, driving innovative research and academic programs, and streamlining structures to eliminate barriers and accelerate impact. As a community builder, the dean must ensure CoEC's strong support and mentorship for its students, staff, and faculty. The dean will also be tasked with navigating a dynamic landscape in higher education, addressing challenges like enrollment, ensuring financial health, and integrating the distinctive strengths and cultures of three highly respected units. The dean will have a unique opportunity to galvanize CoEC around a shared vision of advancing societal solutions and research while delivering an adaptive and immersive education of the highest quality.

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.

DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Overview

Founded in 1891, Drexel is the 13th largest private, not-for-profit university in the nation and one of the top 10 largest employers in Philadelphia. There is a "can do" spirit at Drexel--the result of a culture that has valued innovation and agency throughout its history. Drexel is an institution of choice for students seeking an education grounded in professional experiences, for researchers seeking to join some of the most innovative and successful 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.

Drexel is a university on the move. The University rose from 133rd in 2021 to 80th in *U.S. News and World Report's* 2026 college ranking, and was ranked as the 29th "Most Innovative" in 2024. In 2024, Drexel ranked 54th in the country in the *Wall Street Journal's* list of "2024 Best Colleges in the U.S." In 2023, Drexel disclosed 56 new inventions and received 26 U.S. patents, adding to its 482 patents overall. Drexel University has consistently appeared on the National Academy of Inventors and Intellectual Property Owners Association's list of the world's top 100 universities for patents granted.

Drexel is organized into 11 schools and colleges: College of Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering and Computing, College of Nursing and Health Professions, Dornsife School of Public Health, Drexel University College of Medicine, Kline School of Law, Goodwin College of Professional Studies, Lebow College of Business, Pennoni Honors College, Pennsylvania College of Optometry, and Westphal College of Media and Art Design.

President

Antonio Merlo, PhD, became Drexel University's 16th president on July 1, 2025. An accomplished higher education leader, scholar, and professor, Merlo joined Drexel after serving since 2019 as the Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science at New York University. NYU Arts & Science is the institution's largest academic unit, comprised of 1,600 faculty and staff members, three schools, dozens of departments, research centers, institutes, 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 E. Jensen, PhD, was appointed Nina Henderson Provost and University Professor at Drexel University in 2020. Jensen was previously dean and R. John Chapel, Jr. Dean's Chair of the LeBow College of Business. Jensen was on the faculty at LeBow for over 20 years and has held several leadership roles at LeBow, including associate dean for graduate and undergraduate programs, PhD program director, 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. His primary research areas are in international trade and applied microeconomics.

Academic Transformation

Drexel University is among a select group of institutions bold enough to fundamentally reimagine its academic model and curriculum. At a time when higher education faces seismic shifts—demographic changes, financial pressures, AI-driven disruption, and the need for inclusive, experiential learning—Drexel is leading with vision and action through its Academic Transformation (AT). With strong collaboration among the Faculty Senate, academic and administrative leaders, President Antonio Merlo, Provost Jensen, and the Board of Trustees, Drexel is forging a roadmap for becoming the university that students and society need. The transformation will make Drexel more agile, innovative, and integrated, streamlining its academic structure to better align educational, financial, and recruitment strategies.

This bold restructuring supports key outcomes of Drexel's Academic Transformation, centering the student experience and delivering three powerful advantages:

- Guaranteed Experience – Every Drexel student graduates with high-quality experiential learning through hands-on courses, co-op, research, service, entrepreneurship, or global study. Backed by more than a century of employer partnerships, these experiences are built into every Drexel education and provide the foundation for students to find their path.

- Flexibility Across Disciplines – Students can move seamlessly across colleges and schools, combine majors, and tap into the full strength of their R1 research university. This flexibility ensures each Drexel education is as multidimensional as students' ambitions.

- Core Competencies for Problem Solving – A three-stage sequence of signature courses equips students with critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving skills. Grounded in Drexel's long tradition of working with external partners, these courses integrate emerging fields like *artificial intelligence* and prepare students to deliver solutions that matter in the real world.

Drexel's Academic Transformation is not just a response to change; it is a proactive leap into the future of higher education.

Cooperative Education

A hallmark of a Drexel education since 1919, Drexel's cooperative education program for undergraduates is one of the nation's oldest, largest, and most highly regarded. Drexel undergraduate students can choose to alternate periods of on-campus (or online) study with full-time employment in related fields. In the Drexel model of cooperative (co-op) education, undergraduate students in their second year and later can hold full-time jobs for up to three six-month durations. Master's program students in Drexel graduate co-op also have a unique opportunity to network and gain educational insights through a work experience in the field.

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. Corporate and industry partners offer an exceptional opportunity to develop talent earlier, inject fresh perspectives into their organization and attract the best students straight from graduation.

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.

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. Drexel students come from nearly all 50 US states and more than 100 countries. Through its campus-based and online programs, the University has nearly 21,000 students worldwide.

Student success at Drexel is supported by a comprehensive network of resources. The Steinbright Career Development Center, Academic Advising, International Students and Scholars Services, and other student-facing offices collaborate closely to provide comprehensive guidance and support. The Center for Inclusive Education and Scholarship (CIES) offers holistic academic support, leadership development, and purposeful programming to enhance student retention and persistence to graduation.

Drexel also offers a dynamic campus experience, with more than 250 student clubs and organizations that foster leadership, community, and personal development. Among the many resources available, the Baiada Institute for Entrepreneurship provides space, mentoring, and resources for students to launch ventures and cultivate entrepreneurial skills, while the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement empowers students to build civic identities and engage in mutually beneficial community partnerships. These are just two examples of the wide range of opportunities that support Drexel students' growth beyond the classroom.

Drexel's athletic programs and recreational facilities are an essential part of campus life. As a member of the Coastal 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. The $750 million campaign publicly launched in 2017 and surpassed its original goal of raising $750 million more than six months ahead of its June 2022 completion date. The campaign advanced University priorities related to student success (including scholarships, fellowships and co-op), faculty research, endowed professorships and chairs, academic support, civic engagement and learning spaces on campus.

Drexel has total revenues of $1.02 billion and total endowment assets in excess of $1 billion.

Drexel University is actively implementing a multi-year financial resilience plan to address a structural budget imbalance and ensure long-term resilience. University leadership has identified over $80 million in cost reductions for fiscal year 2025 and is pursuing strategic initiatives—including administrative streamlining and real estate optimization—to align expenses with revenue. Despite current financial pressures driven by sector-wide challenges, Drexel remains committed to its academic mission and is leveraging this moment to build a stronger, more efficient institution for the future.

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTING

Officially opening its doors in September 2026, the College of Engineering and Computing was announced as a cornerstone of Drexel's Academic Transformation. Three schools will be integrated under the umbrella of the new CoEC: the School of Engineering, the School of Computer & Information Science, and the School of Biomedical Engineering and Science. The new College will include 5,284 students, including 4,005 undergraduates and 1,279 graduate students, 207 full-time faculty, and 135 full-time staff. The combined FY2025 total expenditures for the three units amount to approximately $113.6 million across all funds. This merger represents a strategic effort to bolster curricula, expand research initiatives, and enrich the student experience.

School of Engineering

Founded as the School of Engineering in 1906, the School prepares adaptable engineers, dedicated to discovery and the application of technology while remaining mindful of the global, social and ethical implications of creating sustainable solutions to societal challenges. The SoE offers undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and certification programs through six core departments: Chemical and Biological Engineering; Civil, Architectural and Environmental Engineering; Electrical and Computer Engineering; Engineering Leadership and Society; Materials Science and Engineering; and Mechanical Engineering and Mechanics.

The School supports multidisciplinary research initiatives, priding itself on bringing together thought leaders with the breadth of expertise necessary to tackle complex and challenging issues. The SoE contains world-class centers, institutes, and labs. School faculty and students conduct fundamental and applied research, explore new technologies, and commercialize ideas, expanding the intellectual frontiers while addressing societal needs.

Aligning with the School's strategic plan, Building on Tradition for Tomorrow: Engineering Our Future Together, the unit is reimagining engineering education, remaining flexible and responsive in adapting curricula and support systems to match student and workforce needs. The plan is further realized through the SoE's rich student experience with programs such as Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP), DELTA (Drexel Engineering Leadership Transformation Academy), the NAE Grand Challenge Scholars Program, and the Engineering Leadership Scholars Program.

Drexel faculty are recognized globally for their groundbreaking contributions and research impact. According to Clarivate's Highly Cited Researchers list, Yuri Gogotsi, PhD, ranks #7 worldwide for career impact in the field of Nanoscience & Nanotechnology, Michel Barsoum, PhD, #8 worldwide for Materials, and Charles Haas, PhD, #80 worldwide for environmental engineering.

School of Computer & Information Science

Founded in 2013 as a response to the growing role of computing and informatics, the School of Computer & Information Science offers a rich, cohesive academic program contributing to theory and practice along dimensions that include technical, human, organizational, policy and societal considerations. This broad perspective positions the School's students, staff, and faculty to address the complex, multi-disciplinary problems that are increasingly common as society becomes more dependent on information technology.

The School of Computer & Information Science offers a comprehensive portfolio of programs within its two departments of Computer Science and Information Science. The School offers bachelor's degrees in computer science, computing and security technology, data science, and software engineering and master's degrees in artificial intelligence and machine learning, computer science, data science, human-computer interaction and user experience (UX), information systems, library and information science, and software engineering. In addition, the School offers doctoral programs in computer science and information science.

The School of Computer & Information Science is home to one of the oldest continually ALA-accredited library and information science programs in the country: the Library and Information Science major in the School's Master of Science in Information degree program. The School is a founding member of the iSchools Caucus of 29 prominent colleges dedicated to advancing the information field in the 21st Century. SCI's Library and Information Science graduate major is consistently noted as one of the best graduate degrees in the country, ranking 13th according to *U.S. News & World Report* in 2025. Other high-ranking specialties include information systems (No. 1), digital librarianship (No. 3), services for children and youth (No. 12), and archives and preservation (No. 16).

School of Biomedical Engineering and Science

Founded more than 60 years ago, the School of Biomedical Engineering and Science educates and empowers future biomedical innovators through interdisciplinary research, design thinking, and immersive learning. With a mission to transform the future of health and humanity, the School aligns its work with its Strategy Forward 2030 plan, enhancing high-quality immersive learning experiences and outcomes for its students.

The School offers a comprehensive curriculum across undergraduate, master's, doctoral, and certificate programs. The School consists of two core programs: Biomedical Engineering (BME) and Biomedical Science (BMS). At the undergraduate level, the School offers a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering (BME). At the graduate level, the School offers Master of Science (MS) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs in both BME and BMS. Areas of graduate specialization include biomechanics, rehabilitation, biomaterials and tissue engineering, biosensors and biomedical imaging, biostatistics, genome science and bioinformatics, human factors and performance engineering, neuroengineering, and systems biology. The School also offers four advanced certificate programs in Tissue Engineering, Bioinformatics, Neurotechnologies and Neurosystems, and Medical Product Design and Device Development.

Central to the School's mission, the Drexel Coulter Translational Research Partnership Program improves patient care with the goal of moving innovative technologies to clinical application through

commercialization. In addition, the Global Innovation Partnership (GIP), an endowed initiative hosted at The School of Biomedical Engineering and Science accelerates lifesaving healthcare solutions by connecting research, entrepreneurship, business, and investment communities worldwide. The School's faculty and researchers hold 125 patents, including 90 U.S. and 35 foreign patents.

The Biomedical Engineering program ranks in the top eight percent of America's institutions of higher education according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

ROLE OF THE DEAN

The dean of the College of Engineering and Computing (CoEC) will play a pivotal role in advancing Drexel's mission by shaping a bold strategic vision that positions the College at the leading edge of research and education. Charged with uniting three distinct academic units, the dean will creatively align programs, infrastructure, and governance to strengthen Drexel's brand, signature experiential model, and research. As the College's chief ambassador, the dean will be a skilled fundraiser and relationship-builder, deepening connections with alumni, partners, and external stakeholders. The ideal candidate will bring executive-level leadership, demonstrated academic excellence, fiscal knowledge, transparent communication, and a collaborative spirit—energizing the College's local, national, and global impact.

The dean will oversee and provide leadership to the heads of the College's constituent units, who report directly to the dean.

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:

Set the vision for a unified college

The creation of CoEC is a cornerstone of Drexel's Academic Transformation—an ambitious reinvention that builds on the University's strengths while reducing fragmentation and unlocking innovation across disciplines. The inaugural dean will define and champion a compelling, unifying vision for CoEC. The dean will lead with strategic vision and creativity, aligning academic programs, research infrastructure, governance, and operations to foster a cohesive, energized, and forward-focused culture. This collaborative work will happen within CoEC and across campus. The role requires thoughtful leadership to harmonize academic programs, curricula, governance, operations, and infrastructure—ensuring alignment with Drexel's goals for student flexibility, experiential learning, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Build on institutional strengths to elevate CoEC and Drexel

Drexel has a strong foundation in experiential education, external partnerships, and innovation, and a history of strength in engineering and computing. The dean will build on these assets, projecting an exciting brand backed up by excellence, to continue to elevate the CoEC's reputation and impact. This is essential work so that CoEC can attract a robust stream of students, and recruit and retain exceptional faculty and staff. As the inaugural dean articulates a compelling value proposition and elevates CoEC's

presence across Drexel, the nation, and beyond, they will also be focused on the good of the larger university and ensuring Drexel's collective strength and success.

Foster a highly student-centered environment

Academic Transformation centers on Drexel's deep commitment to its students. As part of AT, all programs across the university are being redesigned to support student choice, flexibility, and required experiential learning. The dean of CoEC will play a central role in implementing new education programs, curricula, and models, and ensuring advising, co-op, and career services are equitable and high-quality. The dean must also guide the College through Drexel's transition to a semester calendar. It will be important to ensure the execution of proven practices across units to enhance satisfaction and retention, while also expanding graduate and doctoral programs to strengthen research and career pathways. This work will help Drexel fulfill its commitment to preparing graduates for a dynamic job market and continue to draw a robust pipeline of students.

Advance research excellence and interdisciplinary impact

The dean will lead Drexel's most research-productive college, stewarding an enterprise with more than $25 million in annual sponsored research. Building on the strengths of Engineering, Computing, and Biomedical units, the College is poised to drive discovery in areas such as health innovation, AI and data science, sustainability, advanced materials and manufacturing, nanotechnology, cybersecurity, and robotics. The dean will unify distinct research cultures, foster large-scale interdisciplinary collaborations, and set clear priorities that elevate visibility and impact. Success will require strengthening internal infrastructure and support services while cultivating industry partnerships that fuel innovation, applied research, and workforce development.

Drive enrollment growth and resource development

The dean must align strategy with resources, drive operational efficiency, and support CoEC and Drexel's long-term financial sustainability. In a competitive market for students, the dean will work closely with Drexel's enrollment management team to attract prospective students and ensure competitive aid packages. A practical and strategic leader, the dean will assess the unique needs of CoEC's programs and facilities to optimize resource allocation and operations. They will also pursue new revenue opportunities—including professional master's and certificate programs, industry partnerships, and philanthropy—in support of CoEC's financial stability and investment needs, which include space and facilities.

Develop a cohesive and high-performing college culture

The dean will foster a unified, collaborative culture across the newly integrated College, bridging distinct academic identities and promoting shared values. Success will require steady leadership, transparent communication, and active engagement with faculty and staff to ensure all members of CoEC feel supported and empowered. The dean will uphold high standards for appointment, promotion, and tenure, while advancing professional development and career growth. Looking at the long-term success of the College, the dean will establish strategies to hire into priority areas and attract world-class scholars to Drexel. By navigating integration challenges and aligning the College around a consistent vision, the dean will build trust, strengthen accountability, and create an environment where excellence can thrive.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful dean candidate will possess all the following skills, credentials, and personal qualities:

- An earned doctorate in a field represented by the College and a record of scholarly achievement appropriate for appointment as a tenured full professor;
- Proven experience as a change leader, with a record of guiding institutions or academic units through periods of transformation;
- A well-informed commitment to student-centered, experiential learning, and the ability to implement the latest pedagogical models conscientiously and effectively;
- An experienced academic administrator with a track record of success; an astute understanding of finances and budget, and a desire for financial transparency;
- A bold thinker about the future of higher education;
- A leader who is hands-on, detail-oriented, and capable of engaging deeply with both strategy and execution;
- Experience developing strong teams and leading a dedicated team of staff;
- A highly collaborative individual with exceptional interpersonal skills to work effectively with a variety of partners inside and outside of the university; the ability to engage broadly and inspire enthusiasm for the potential of the College;
- An adept communicator who can articulate the distinctive narrative of the College; the ability to cultivate key external constituencies and to fundraise;
- Experience recruiting and developing outstanding faculty;
- Experience shaping enrollment strategy;
- Belief in and support for the importance of undergraduate learning and research experiences;
- A demonstrated commitment to cultivating an academic culture where faculty, staff, and students of all backgrounds are valued and included for their unique perspectives.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Applications (CV and cover letter required), inquiries, and nominations should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website.

Andy Lee, Managing Partner
Amy Segal, Partner
Ibaad Nazeer, Associate
Olivia McVicker, Managing Search Coordinator

Isaacson, Miller
https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/drexel-university-college-engineering-and-computing/dean

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Isaacson, Miller, and Drexel University are committed to creating an inclusive environment and welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any accommodation or access needs, we are happy to provide reasonable accommodations.

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