

Regarding the Restructuring of OED into EIC and the SCDI

Charlie Stuart (he/they)

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My name is Charlie Stuart (he/they). In June 2022, I graduated with my BS in Computer Science. During my five years as a student, I worked individually as an **LGBTQ +** activist with many departments at Drexel, including, but not limited to: The College of Computing and Informatics (CCI), The Office of Equality and Diversity (OED), the Student Center for Diversity and Inclusion (SCDI), the Center for the Advancement of STEM Teaching and Learning Excellence (CASTLE), Campus Engagement (CE), and the Provost's Office. I am currently serving as a Council Coordinator for CCI's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council.

After receiving the September 8th announcement on the creation of the Office of Institutional Equity and Inclusive Culture, I investigated how this change would affect both the Council's existing partnership with the **SCDI** and the **LGBTQ +** community as a whole at Drexel. Based on my research into the history of the **SCDI**, **OED**, and student advocacy at Drexel, I am concerned that this restructure may have unforeseen devastating consequences for the student body. My findings demonstrate the importance of the **SCDI** being based primarily in Student Life, as it has a symbiotic relationship with the student organizations and student body. If this is no longer an option, then I urge the **EIC** leadership to create a position for an Executive Director of the **SCDI** in order to strengthen its advocacy for students and facilitate continued growth.

Terminology

Offices and Departments

Active

CBC: Center for Black Culture

CE: Campus Engagement

CIES: Center for Inclusive Education and Scholarship

CMVS: Center for Military and Veteran Services

DNP: Dragons Navigators Program

EIC: Office of Institutional Equity and Inclusive Culture

SCDI: Student Center For Diversity and Inclusion

HR: Human Resources

SRL: Spiritual and Religious Life

Inactive

OED: Office of Equality and Diversity

SCIC: Student Center for Inclusion and Culture

TLU: Tumbo La Umoja

Student Organizations

Active

LUC: Latinos for a United Campus

QPOC: Queer People of Color

QSU: Queer Student Union

Inactive

FUSE: The Foundation of Undergraduates for Sexual Equality

oSTEM: Out in STEM at Drexel University

Phrases

AHLANA: African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian, Native American

DEI: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DIB: Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

EEO: Equal Employment Opportunity

LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQA, LGBTQIA: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Ace-Spectrum/Ally. A “+” may be added to include identities not listed

The SCDI and Student Life

The SCDI and OED have consistently and historically served different populations in very different ways. OED focuses on internal affairs while the SCDI is quite literally built on student advocacy.

The History of OED

In 2013, Michele Rovinsky-Mayer, Drexel's associate vice president of Equality & Diversity, did a Q&A with Drexel News. I believe this similar to the position that Kim Gholston currently holds.

“The foundation of the Office of Equality & Diversity has always been about compliance; preventing discrimination and increasing representation of historically underrepresented populations - racial minorities, females, veterans and people with disabilities. While that is the foundation of what this office does, we also do education and outreach that supports a diverse and inclusive community. When you have a diverse and inclusive community, issues of discrimination and underrepresentation are less likely to exist.” [6]

The article states how OED is focused on compliance and education. The resources that the article mentions are specifically employee resource groups. Nothing is mentioned in terms of providing resources to students. This is consistent with how OED has operated in the past 9 years.

My understanding is that OED has been functioning as a department of HR, not by title, but by nature of its leadership. While it appears that OED has always reported to the Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer. Kim Gholston currently holds this title and sent out the September 8th, EIC Announcement email [24]. However, on the President's Cabinet directory [29] and Executive Council directory [27], her title is listed as “Associate Vice President for Human Resources and Chief Diversity Officer”. Additionally, on November 10th, 2016, President John Fry's sent out an email titled “Moving On as a Community After the Election” [28]. After speaking on how the SCIC has continually supported students, the email states, “I want to assure you that our

professional staff in Student Life, Human Resources, Faculty Affairs, as well as our colleagues in the Lindy Center for Civic Engagement, will be there for your support”. I find it strange how [OED](#) is not mentioned, but [HR](#) is.

The Creation of the [SCDI](#)

The [SCDI](#) was established in September 2017 when the [SCIC](#) and [LGBTQA](#) Student Center were merged. I have yet to find an official announcement of this merger. However, this change can be seen in Drexel News’s series “Briefly Noted”. Their “Construction Updates” show the change in offices.

From July, 2017, “***Academic Building, Ground Floor Renovation: Construction is well underway on the ground floor of the Academic Building, creating the new home for the James E. Marks Intercultural Center, as well as offices for the Office of Equality and Diversity, the Student Center for Inclusion and Culture, Spiritual and Religious Life and the LGBTQA Student Center. The project is on track for completion in fall 2017***” [9].

From October, 2017, “***James E. Marks Intercultural Center (Academic Building): The new home of the James E. Marks Intercultural Center, located on the ground floor of the Academic Building, includes offices for the Office of Equality and Diversity, the Student Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and the Spiritual and Religious Life Center***” [10].

The October, 2017 article is incorrect, however; Another Drexel News article posted on March 13th, 2018, states “*Within the center, there are suites for the Office of Equality and Diversity (OED) and the Office of Spiritual and Religious Life, as well as a testing center for students with disabilities*” [11]. Showing the [SCDI](#) was not moved from Creese.

There was a period of time where the [SCIC](#) was located in the Intercultural Center. It appears the many controversial relocations presented a variety of concerns to former [SCIC](#) Directors Tatiana Diaz and Alex Iannucci [5, 32].

In the Creese Student Center, the [SCDI](#) was separate from [OED](#) by location, mission, and function. Just as the [SCDI](#) is today, both the [SCIC](#) and the [LGBTQA](#) Student Center were focused on student advocacy and support. This is stated explicitly in President Fry’s email on November 18th, 2015, titled “A Welcoming Culture of Inclusion” [26].

“ One valuable resource at Drexel is the Student Center for Inclusion and Culture (SCIC), where Tatiana Diaz and her staff foster education around social justice and identity and advocate for students from all cultural backgrounds.” [26]

Diaz’s advocacy was further commended at the 2014 President’s Awards Ceremony. The Triangle article states, *“LGBTQ advocate Tatiana Diaz (...) was acknowledged for spreading LGBTQ awareness in the Drexel community. Diaz works with students and LGBTQ organizations to raise LGBTQ issues and awareness to Drexel” [1].*

This culture of advocacy did not stop with Tatiana Diaz. Alex Iannucci, Diaz’s successor as Director of the SCIC, spoke on their commitment to the student body with the Triangle in 2016. As the new Director, they stated they want “the Drexel University community to know the SCIC is focused on thriving as a student-centered organization” [32]. I would briefly like to note that multiple articles use the incorrect pronouns to refer to Alex Iannucci. I have intentionally edited all quotes to correctly use they/them pronouns.

“If I could spend all day talking with students, I would,” Iannucci said.” [32]

“Iannucci says they are actively working to create inclusive space in all areas of the Drexel community so that a welcoming atmosphere exists everywhere. They do this at the SCIC by making themselves a resource for students, providing public education programs and building relationships and collaborations through these programs.” [32]

“The SCIC is building from the new, and working with students and faculty alike to create inclusive spaces that community members can participate in maintaining.” [32]

“The SCIC wants to make sure the community has an easy way to access resources they can use to work towards creating a more inclusive community for themselves and others. A student-centered organization making a new beginning in many ways, the SCIC is here for all Drexel students and the community they live in to utilize.” [32]

Even through the transition period between Diaz and Iannucci’s leadership, the SCIC made sure to highlight its goal *“to bridge the gap between Drexel’s administration and its*

students” [8] at the Diversity and Inclusion End of the Year Celebration. Even under the leadership of SCIC Transition Team Managers Noor Jemy and Christina Bowles, the SCIC continually reaffirms its commitment to students and supporting student-led initiatives.

“The SCIC hosts 120 programs, events, heritage months and student led events each year.” [8]

“The SCIC caters to student groups including interfaith and cultural organizations on campus by advertising, providing space, networking and collaborating with students.” [8]

“If a student has an idea, they come to us and we will make it reality,” Jemy told audience members to conclude the event.” [8]

“The SCIC encourages students to contact them for the implementation of any ideas.” [8]

The History of the LGBTQA Student Center

The LGBTQA Center focused on students because it was built by students. As stated by the Triangle in their October 25th, 2013, article, “*The idea for the LGBTQA Student Center came from a group of deeply committed students who organized a request that showed a clear need for the center*” [3]. In 2012, the student organization FUSE alongside OUTgrads and OUTlaw started a petition [51] for the creation of this center. Their petition repeatedly states how important it is for this center to exist for students.

“The presence of an LGBTQ center on campus - a safe space staffed with trained professionals - would solidify Drexel’s commitment to embracing diversity and raise awareness of a significant portion of the student body that often feel invisible and unaddressed. An LGBTQ center would provide support for students who are questioning their sexuality, looking for assistance with the coming-out process, struggling with discrimination on campus, or searching for a sense of community. An LGBTQ center would also serve as a headquarters for the currently scattered LGBTQ student groups (FUSE, OUTLaws, OUTGrads, LGBTQ Health Alliance) unified by a physical location on campus.” [51]

The LGBTQA Center was heavily requested and strongly needed on campus; the petition states,

“In the Spring/Summer of 2011, Drexel University Enrollment Management conducted a study to analyze the effectiveness of the Drexel’s LGBTQ recruitment initiatives, and the experiences of Drexel’s LGBTQ students, both during the college-search process and once they arrived on campus. The executive summary of the study concluded that, “the LGBTQ student environment at Drexel was neither a positive nor negative factor in their enrollment ... and once they are on campus, LGBTQ students do not find Drexel to be especially LGBTQ friendly or unfriendly.”

While only a small percentage of students expressed experiences of harassment or discrimination at Drexel, 30% of the respondents say they “conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid negative consequences.” An important question that was asked during the survey, “How can Drexel become more LGBTQ-friendly?” An overwhelming majority of respondents stated, “An on-Campus LGBTQ Student Center.”” [51]

In addition to the petition, the article “Student Movement Pushes for LGBTQ Center on Campus” [49] posted on February 21st, 2012 by Drexel News states that Director of the Office of Multicultural Programs, Kerry Hooks, “ran eight focus groups last year to assess student needs and all mentioned the need for an LGBTQ center” [49] .

On October 22nd, 2013, the LGBTQA Student Center opened on the garden level of the Creese Student Center as a department under Student Affairs, now Student Life, and supported by the SCIC. The support from the SCIC was more than a title. At the opening, Maureen Nolan, President of FUSE, stated, “This project has been pushed by a lot of passion, and that’s what we’ve got going for us. Tatiana Diaz is a really big driving force. Under her leadership, Drexel will really transform” [3].



Image from the article “Drexel Coming Out for New LGBTQA Center” [12].

Image Description: A silver Drexel sign on a yellow wall. It uses the formal Drexel University logotype for an office/department. A navy blue dragon sits to the left of three rows of text. The top line of text, in small navy blue lettering, “Drexel University”. The second line of text, in large black lettering, “LGBTQA Student Center”. The third line of text, in italicized black lettering “Student Affairs”. Underneath the official logotype and aforementioned text, in black lettering, “Supported by the Student Center for Inclusion & Culture”.

To celebrate the opening of the LGBTQA Student Center, Drexel News posted an article titled “Drexel Coming Out for New LGBTQA Center” [12]. The article includes quotes from a student panel at the opening. I would like to bring attention to quotes made by Maureen Nolan.

“[The center] is not only a symbol of respect and allegiance to the LGBT students, but a necessity.” [12]

“Drexel is constantly evolving and currently in the process of rebuilding their entire campus,” Nolan said. “I think it is crucial that Drexel remember its LGBT students in this new building process and create an even better space for them.” [12]

These quotes still ring true today during the time of the EIC restructure. Now, more than ever, it is crucial to consider the way this new office affects the LGBTQ + community at Drexel. The article explicitly states the importance of the center’s creation for future growth. The Director of the SCIC, Tatianna Diaz is quoted as saying “It is our hope to be able to acknowledge the journey that has led us to the opening of the center and be able to dream together for the future of the center and the Drexel community” [12].

Diaz further states “*We thank all those that have worked to make this center happen and that have laid the foundational work of LGBTQA advocacy on campus - we are thrilled that it is here and we want to see it continue to grow*” [12]. I would like to thank FUSE, OUTgrads, OUTlaw, and the SCIC for laying the foundation for me to advocate for the future of the SCDI.

Queer Student Organizations, the SCIC, and the SCDI

FUSE stated in their petition “*An LGBTQ center would also serve as a headquarters for the currently scattered LGBTQ student groups (FUSE, OUTLaws, OUTGrads, LGBTQ Health Alliance) unified by a physical location on campus*” [51]. This sentiment held true. While the Queer student organizations and the SCDI have seen many structural changes in the past 10 years, the partnership and unity of the LGBTQ + community remains strong.

On October 22nd, 2014, the LGBTQA Center celebrated its one year anniversary. The Triangle posted their article, “LGBTQA Center Celebrates Year’s Accomplishments”, on October 31st, 2014. Their article continually shows the mutual support the SCIC, LGBTQA Center, and FUSE provide each other with. Diaz states “*When the space first opened, we were only open 15 hours per week. Now, thanks to dedicated students, we have increased our hours of operation to 25.5 per week*” [20]. Furthermore, FUSE President Emily Ranieri “*explained how FUSE works very closely with the center and how its growth is very beneficial for not only FUSE itself, but the campus as a whole*” [20].

In 2014, LGBTQA Student Center student employee Chantanae Singletary spoke to SCIC Director Tatianna Diaz about “*an idea for a group that would talk about “sexual orientation, race and gender as they meet at an intersection”*” [31]. Diaz recommended that Singletary start QPOC, an organization for queer people of color at Drexel. This important history is further reiterated on QPOC’s DragonLink page, where it names itself as “*Formerly a student-run branch of the LGBTQA Student Center*” [33].

In 2017, with the assistance of the SCDI, FUSE was rebuilt into QSU in order to create a stronger, more intersectional organization. In the Spring 2017, when “The Ball” was hosted for the first time to provide Drexel with its first Lavendar Graduation [48, 18], QSU executive board members served on the planning committee [15].

When my organization, oSTEM, finally achieved recognition for the 2019-2020 academic year, QSU, QPOC, and oSTEM immediately started collaborating. One of which being a three day long bake-sale to collectively fundraise for all the student organizations [34, 35, 36] following the Transgender Day of Remembrance services the student organizations collaborated on with the SCDI [14]. Even without a formally titled “LGBTQA Center”, the queer student organizations found a home and a community in the SCDI as all organizations share the core values of advocacy and unity.

“QSU is a non-exclusive organization that strives to promote acceptance, understanding, and unity among the LGBTQ + community and with other communities at Drexel University, (...) [W]e want to hold true to Drexel University’s values of civic engagement by advocacy for the LGBTQ + community at large” [37]

“QPOC ultimately serves as a resource for queer people of color to come together throughout each academic quarter and develop a strong community at Drexel.” [33]

The SCDI, QSU, QPOC, and oSTEM organizations have come together to cohost many events. Many of the types of events these organizations collaborate on are listed as responsibilities of the future Associate Director of the SCDI [16]. I would like to call attention to what I consider to be the most influential: the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance services. Every year, the SCDI invites the queer student organization leadership to speak at the memorial. Even when physically separated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the queer student organization leadership was invited to record statements for the online services [2]. When we were able to reconvene in person in 2021, in addition to the morning memorial services, all four organizations cohosted a poetry showcase in order to “provide a platform for our communities to express their feelings and grieve together” [46].

The community advocacy of the partnership between these organizations does not stop with events. In February 2022, all four organizations were contacted by Drexel Athletics regarding the Women’s Basketball Game celebrating “Pride Night” [7]. The groups met before the event to discuss the celebration, tabling logistics, and to create educational materials. When the organizations were disappointed in their treatment during the event and felt their expectations were not met, they regrouped to provide Drexel Athletics with constructive feedback on how to improve the celebration for the future.

While many student organizations consistently collaborate with many offices at Drexel University, the relationship between the [SCDI](#) and the queer student organizations is unique. It was the queer student organizations that petitioned for the creation of the [LGBTQA Student Center](#), which set the foundation for the [SCDI](#). It was the [SCIC](#) and the [SCDI](#) that inspired and supported the creation of new queer student organizations on campus. It is essential to the survival and prosperity of the [LGBTQ + community](#) on campus that this partnership is supported by all offices. Any severance or obstruction of this partnership directly impedes and reverses the progress made by the creation of the [LGBTQA Student Center](#) in 2013.

The [SCDI](#) and [EIC](#)

In the [EIC](#) announcement from September 8th, 2022, it was made clear that the restructure changes were “*effective immediately*” [24]. I understand if it is no longer possible for the [SCDI](#) to return to Student Life. Based on my experiences and research, I believe it is possible for the [SCDI](#) to continue to be a home for the [LGBTQ + community](#) and to remain a pillar of student advocacy.

On September 2nd, 2022, the posting for the Associate Director of the [SCDI](#) was opened [16]. This posting closes on November 3rd, 2022. Since the position is not yet filled and integrated into the [EIC](#), there is still time to address the role of the [SCDI](#) in [EIC](#). Instead of an Associate Director of the [SCDI](#) that reports to the Executive Director of [DIB](#), my research and experience shows that it is essential that there is an Executive Director of the [SCDI](#) that works alongside with the [EIC](#) leadership described in the September 8th announcement. This includes, but is not limited, to Assistant Vice President for Inclusive Culture and Belonging, the Executive Director for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, the Director of Labor Relations and Equal Employment Opportunity, and the Assistant Vice President for Equal Opportunity and Title IX Coordinator. The purpose of an Executive Director of the [SCDI](#) would not only be to oversee the [SCDI](#), but to carry forward the values of the [SCDI](#) and the [SCIC](#) of student advocacy into [EIC](#). There is no leadership role in [EIC](#) dedicated to amplifying and advocating for the student body [21]. An Executive Director of the [SCDI](#), a role “*to bridge the gap between Drexel’s administration and its students*” [8], is necessary for the student body and would facilitate improvement for all departments in [EIC](#).

The September 8th announcement states that **EIC** plans to have a strong connection to Student Success [24]. It states that the Executive Director of **DIB** will sit jointly between **EIC** and Student Success. I believe that an Executive Director of the **SCDI** that jointly sits between **EIC** and Student Success will be a stronger and more effective connection than having an Associate Director of the **SCDI** that reports to the Executive Director of **DIB** that reports to Student Success and **EIC**. Furthermore, I believe an Executive Director of the **SCDI** that sits jointly between Student Success and **EIC** will allow the **SCDI** to continue to effectively serve the student community.

The Structure of **EIC**

Before speaking to the importance of a position for the Executive Director of the **SCDI**, I would like to address the inclusion of the **SCDI** in **EIC** what that means for other organizations at Drexel University.

From the September 8th announcement, it is my interpretation that **EIC** assuming primary responsibility of the **SCDI** in order “*acknowledge that over the past two years, this office [EIC] has increasingly become the central hub of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging strategy for the University*” [24] and to “*reflect its stronger connection to Student Success and its enhanced services to the University community*” [24]. However, upon further research, I do not see how only moving the **SCDI** and **SRL** to **EIC** accomplishes this goal.

Student Life lists four Inclusive Communities at Drexel on its website [47]. These are, in the order listed on their site, the Center for Black Culture (**CBC**), the Student Center for Diversity and Inclusion (**SCDI**), the Center for Inclusive Education and Scholarship (**CIES**), and the Center for Military and Veteran Services (**CMVS**). The **CBC** was already a member of **OED**. I understand **EIC**'s goal to become a home for **DEI** initiatives at Drexel University and I see how having all the Inclusive Communities under one roof would allow for “*improved advocacy, communication and response times, as well as increased educational opportunities*” [24]. However, only the **CBC**, **SCDI**, and **SRL** are overseen by **EIC**. I do not understand why **EIC** would neglect the importance of **CIES** and **CMVS** and the services they provide to the University community.

The September 8th announcement mentions that the “*fall 2021 climate survey confirmed that EIC needed to enhance its service experience to the Drexel community through (...)*”

increased educational opportunities” [24]. However, the announcement does not provide any information as to how the EIC plans to increase educational opportunities. This is further exaggerated by the fact that the word “education” does not appear anywhere else in the announcement. The word “learning” does appear earlier, however, it is only used to describe one of three types of environments where members of the University are respected. I was hoping to see how this commitment to increasing educational opportunities reflected in the EIC’s mission, vision, and guiding principles [22], but was further disappointed that “education” is not mentioned once. I was relieved to see that the EIC’s Mission states, “*We strive to develop inclusive culture-builders to foster dialogue across differences, and to inspire holistic learning and growth*” [22]. Only one leadership role exists in OED regarding education [21], being the Assistant Director, Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Education. The September 8th announcement includes the list of personnel changes that “*reflect its (...) enhanced services to the University community*” [24]. I assume that since the aforementioned position was not listed in this announcement, EIC has no plans to enhance or increase the educational opportunities it provides. The most effective way to address the concerns brought up in the fall 2021 climate survey would be to include all of Drexel’s inclusive communities in this merge, not just the SCDI and SRL. The goal of the CIES is “*is to support the academic experience of Drexel students, from pre-college access programs to graduation and beyond*” [50]. The CIES already “*provides support for programs which serve traditionally underrepresented and underserved populations*” [50]. I understand the decision to not include the CIES in this restructure. Despite being listed as an Inclusive Community by Student Life, it is not a member of Student Life as it is its own department. I still find it concerning that it was announced that the Office of Institutional Equity and Inclusive Culture was created to address the need for increased educational opportunities, however, the Center for Inclusive Education and Scholarship and the services it provides were not even acknowledged, much less included.

I find it especially concerning that the CMVS was not included in EIC. As stated in the announcement, “*The Office for Institutional Equity and Inclusive Culture (EIC) will continue to fulfill the critical duties of ensuring that the University complies with its own policies and with federal, state and local laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment based on all protected statuses*” [24]. As per the Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 [53] and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 [54], veteran and military status is a federally protected class. I do not doubt that Drexel University follows the law and provides equal employment opportunity regardless of veteran and military status. As stated in 2013, OED is about more than just “*compliance; preventing discrimination and increasing representation of historically underrepresented populations - racial minorities, females, veterans and people with*

disabilities” [6], it also does “*education and outreach that supports a diverse and inclusive community*” [6]. I find it strange that EIC neglected to include the CMVS Inclusive Community in its restructuring. I find this especially strange considering that CMVS is a member of Student Life and that “*EIC’s new name comes some organizational and personnel changes within the office that reflect its stronger connection to Student Success*” [24]. I do not see how EIC can have a strong connection to Student Success if it does not acknowledge and support all of the Inclusive Communities that exist.

The Voice of The Student in EIC

The necessity of the Executive Director of the SCDI to serve as an advocate for the student body in EIC leadership is most clearly shown by the language used in the September 8th announcement. The announcement states that the EIC changes “*reflect its stronger connection to Student Success and its enhanced services to the University community*” and that “*the EIC team is energized by these changes and looks forward to partnering with Drexel’s schools, colleges, administrative units and student body to realize our vision for a stronger, more vibrant, equitable and inclusive Drexel where all feel welcome and valued*” [24]. While I do see a stronger departmental connection, I do not see an environment where the student body’s voice is welcomed, explicitly sought, or valued.

In the announcement, the word “student” appears 11 times. Eight of these are the title of an office or an administrator. Two of these are used in the phrase “student-facing initiatives”. Only once does the word “student” appear to reference the collection of individuals whom attend this university. Furthermore, the word student does not appear at all in the EIC mission, vision, or guiding principles [22]. The EIC’s announcement, mission, vision, and guiding principles repeatedly state the importance of inclusion, belonging, “*and of promoting, supporting and providing resources to sustain a living, learning and working environment in which all members of the University community are valued*” [24]. How are students supposed to feel welcome and valued in an environment that only acknowledges them once?

On the contrary, the SCDI uses languages that does not simply state that the student should feel welcome and valued, but actively support and empower the student.

“The Student Center for Diversity and Inclusion (SCDI) supports and empowers students of all backgrounds as they build a sense of community that reflects the diversity of Drexel University’s student body. Our office engages Drexel’s [AHLANA](#), [LGBTQA +](#), first generation, and international student populations through direct advocacy and intentional identity-based community building. We are active advocates for student diversity, intersectional social justice, and education on campus; and we work to ensure our students feel their whole identity is included and respected during their time here at Drexel.” [45]

In this one paragraph, the word “student” appears six times. Only once is it used in the context of an administrative title. It is used once as an adjective to describe the type of diversity the [SCDI](#) actively advocates for. It is used four times to reference the individuals that are members of the Drexel University community. In one paragraph, the [SCDI](#) recognizes the student community four times more than the [EIC](#) announcement, mission, vision, and guiding principles combined.

Additionally, I want to draw attention to the language each organization uses regarding initiatives. The [EIC](#)’s use of the term “student-facing initiatives” instead of “student-focused” or “student-led” speaks volumes as to how the [EIC](#) views students. This language is one sided. It provides initiatives that students can see, but not interact with or participate in. The [SCDI](#)’s message does not have the same tone. The [SCDI](#) is not a “student-facing” organization, it is an organization that intentionally builds community.

If I could choose only two words to show how important the [SCDI](#)’s voice is, I would quote the end of their message where they state, “*our students*” [45]. With one word, “our”, they showed that an inclusive and welcoming environment is not a vision, but a reality that is further built on to create a supportive and empowering community.

In the past 10 years, the [SCIC](#) and the [SCDI](#) have seen three directors, Tatiana Diaz, Alex Iannucci, and Maurice Cottman. Regardless of who has held this position, the [SCDI](#) has always and will always hold true to its core value of student advocacy. Students know that regardless of who holds this position, it is someone they can trust. The [SCDI](#) and [SCIC](#) historically have always had a Director. An administrative change will not stop students from finding safety and resources at the [SCDI](#). I worry that diminishing this essential Director position into a smaller Associate Director will impede the [SCDI](#)’s ability to advocate for students. Furthermore, I worry that without an Executive Director of the [SCDI](#) in [EIC](#) leadership, the “*new direction*” of the “*student-facing aspects of*” the [EIC](#)’s

“diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging work” [24] created by the personnel changes will be backwards, instead of forwards.

The Bandwidth of EIC and Future Growth of the SCDI

Without an Executive Director of the SCDI, I am concerned if EIC or the Executive Director of DIB have enough resources to properly oversee the SCDI.

The former Director of the SCDI, Maurice Cottman, announced his departure from Drexel University on May 4th, 2022. The Associate Director of the SCDI position was posted four months later on September 2nd, 2022. The application closes on November 3rd, 2022. This potentially leaves the SCDI with only an Assistant Director for at least an additional two more months. I am concerned and confused as to why there has been such delay in creating a job posting. The current timeline would have the Associate Director starting in the middle of the academic year, either part way through the Fall or Winter term. I am concerned about the Executive Director of DIB’s ability to onboard an Associate Director of the SCDI in the middle of a term only a few months after the Executive Director of DIB started overseeing the SCDI; especially considering the Executive Director has already spent part of this time out of the country with limited access to Wi-Fi.

This timeline is extremely concerning, as OED has already demonstrated it does not have the resources to be aware of, or make the Drexel community aware of the spiritual and religious accommodations the SCDI provides. The SCDI’s Nondenominational Prayer Room and Meditation Room have been open in the Rush building for the full 2021-2022 academic year. The OED Religious Accommodations [23] still does not have this space listed. If OED has not been able to publicize and promote these spaces over the past year, I worry about EIC’s ability to oversee this space, in addition to many other resources the SCDI provides, such as Mario’s Market, the Lactation Room, and the Sensory Room.

An Executive Director of the SCDI is necessary to ensure that EIC has the bandwidth to not just oversee the SCDI, but facilitate its growth to expand and rebuild the resources it provides to students.

On June 12th, 2020, the Drexel University community received an announcement from President Fry about the creation of the Center For Black Culture [25]. In the same

announcement, it was stated that the [CBC](#) would “*be a partner resource to the Student Center for Diversity and Inclusion*”. One month later, on July 17th, 2020, the Office of the President announced the first floor of the Rush Building would be home to the [CBC](#) [30]. There was no mention of the [SCDI](#) in this announcement. A year later, on September 20th, 2021, it was announced that the [SCDI](#) had also been moved to the Rush Building.

I had originally assumed the creation of the [CBC](#) and its partnership with the [SCDI](#) was to provide support to Tumbo La Umoja ([TLU](#)) [52], the existing Black Resource Center within the [SCDI](#) [44, 40] that had been active since 2017. However, the announcements from the Office of the President did not acknowledge the [SCDI](#) nor the resources it provides to Black students until after the move in 2021.

The move to the Rush Building in 2021 gave the [SCDI](#) more physical space to create permanent resources for the Drexel community. This includes the aforementioned Nondenominational Prayer Room and Meditation Room, Drexel’s first and only food pantry, Mario’s Market, Drexel’s first Sensory Room, the next being the Wellness Zone opened in June, 2022 [13], and the Lactation Room, which now serves as both [OED](#) and [EIC](#)’s first and only Lactation Room [17]. Despite the opportunities provided in this move, it appears the [SCDI](#) was unable to rebuild the resources centers it previously provided. These resource centers are the Women’s Resource Center, the Black Resource Center ([TLU](#)), the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, the Recovery Resource Center (Students in Recovery), and the Latinx Resource Center (El Centro Latinx) [44, 40, 4]. These resource centers provided a variety of consistent programming to all students. To name a few, the Women’s Resource Center provided free menstrual and sexual health products to all students [39]. It also hosted biweekly “Hour of Power” [42] conversations that provided the women at Drexel with an empowering community. Students In Recovery hosted weekly recovery meetings “*intended to support students and Drexel community members in recovery from substance-use disorders*” [41]. El Centro Latinx collaborated many times with [LUC](#) [19, 43, 38], further demonstrating the [SCDI](#)’s commitment to student organizations.

I am thankful that [OED](#) was able to create the [CBC](#) to continue the work [TLU](#) started. However, I am concerned about how long it will take for [EIC](#) to create a center with an Executive Director, Assistant Director, and Advisory board for the remaining four resource centers the [SCDI](#) formerly served. An Executive Director of the [SCDI](#) would not only allow for the sustainment of the current programs the [SCDI](#) offers, but also the support necessary to facilitate the revitalization of the resources centers that neither the

SCDI nor Drexel University have been able to offer for many years now.

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