Is Draper University of Heroes a scam or a douchebag training cult?

[Alton Sun](), Dedicated to enhancing the human experience. Infuriated with the lack of init...

(Note: Tim Draper grabbed the cash from the Cleantech Crash and funded the crashed out Obama Administration.)

I attended Draper University and cannot in good conscience recommend it to others.

I have expressed what I have written below multiple times - in private - both to Tim and other admins/recruiters that they've hired. There were no responses.

This post is not written for Tim or the administration. I am past that at this point.
This post is written for the prospective, thoughtful, self-respecting student.

Because I would have wanted a friend to tell me what they really thought.

It's worth knowing that I speak not just for myself, but others who also feel similarly but may feel threatened by Tim and his administration. After sharing time with many other students in subsequent classes, we have a distinct sense that the program purports itself to help you launch a product, but is modeled more like a series of inspirational talks that you could watch online.

Certainly, there is a lot of merit to being in California - but what else could you do with $9.5k and 2 months when you have a mandatory itinerary?

Consider what you could do with that money on your own. Do you really want to go to an institution where they care about you buying your own toilet paper?

Here are some of the biggest disappointments:

- There was a theme for each week, e.g. *speed*, but there was no collaboration between speakers. This lack of congruity felt fragmented and frustrating.
- There were few activities that actually helped us develop our product in a meaningful way; in fact, many of the mandatory modules actually got in our way. Even the workshops I was excited about were a let-down, like 'Learn Programming!', which turned out to be 'spend an afternoon following a basic online tutorial and making a static html page'.
- There was little breathing room to reflect or implement.
- There was no accountability, or followup after the program. (There were a couple surveys about a year ago that they asked us to fill out so they could share with the world how successful we

are, but they have decided not to publish much.) 'Lifetime Mentorship' was excitedly touted, then largely ignored. My mentor is now CEO, but after sending them 3 excited emails about specific ways we could improve the program, I got a single, terse response that was unreceptive.

- I am aware of three others who have made specific, actionable, and thoughtful advances hoping to improve the program, and they were all received coldly. We felt a strong authoritarian presence in the program, and it was clear that most were afraid to stir the pot.
- Tim had me write out his Evangelism Clause 100 times on public walls after I posted about my frustration with having personal property stolen on social media. (I understood that he felt like it might damage his reputation.)

- A student TED-talk day was set up with the intent to build community - I organized it through the Facebook and Tim announced it to the class. 1/3rd of the students showed up. The rest went out drinking or stayed in to work on their product.

- During the first half of the program, we were asked repeatedly how the Draper program could do better. I thought they were genuinely interested so a group of us got together and shared our feelings in a long thoughtful email to Carol, one of the main organizers at the time. I thought that they really cared right up until the point that nothing was done differently and they continued to ask us without really acknowledging any of our input.

- Following the program, I have repeatedly received unsolicited prompts to refer friends in exchange for cash, despite me emailing the recruiter and Tim asking for how their program has changed so I can feel good about recommending it. All were ignored. [I have now received more solicitation emails than I have mentor correspondences]

- They threatened to sue a friend who started a draper university alum network because he used the name and logo, even though it was clearly labeled unofficial. He turned over his registered Instagram and Twitter accounts, and they have done nothing with it. Nurturing community seems like one of the highest leverage things that we could put together to fuel more robust entrepreneurs.

- This is more of a personal feeling; but I was amazed when we would have millionaires come in to speak, and I would see ~20 of the students on Facebook/browsing aimlessly/playing games, ~20 just staring blankly ahead, and maybe 3 students actually taking notes. I was one of them. Btw anyone want to share notes or talk about the lectures? I noticed a distinct lack of conversation about almost any of the content. I'd love to actually see more of the knowledge regularly translated to applied knowledge.

- On your search to learn more about Draper U, you may come across a smattering of effusive reviews - conspicuously, none of them disclose affiliation or subsidized scholarships. In fact, many have signed contracts that prevent them from saying anything not super-positive about the program. This explains why the majority of them are fairly vacant and lack any concrete grounds. "GREATEST EXPERIENCE OF MY LIFE EVERR!!!" If people are truly excited

about a thing, they take the time to really share why in concrete terms. This is not what I'm seeing here.

- When you command as much resources as Tim and you are seen as someone who possibly possesses the key to all of your hopes and dreams (ca$h) - it sets up a very one-sided dynamic. I can't help but think it's not Tim's fault that he believes and sees only what his ego lets past. I feel badly that he has little opportunity to interact with those that have no interest in flattering him, leading him on this appeal to the lowest common denominator...

- A significant % of the current employees who now run the program all used to be 'Draper University school for entrepreneurship' students. I'll let you think about this one.

How many people are actually solving real problems?

Look at the last class: half filled with hollywood models for the TV show Startup U.

One of their products? An iPad in a picture frame that streams how popular clubs are before deciding to go. Does this sound like a 10x product? Does this help people in a meaningful way? Does this signal a deep interest in sustainable, long-term solutions for the far future of humanity?

How about Uber for nail salons?

Would this type of loud signaling and branding of Draper University increase or decrease the likelihood of selecting top-talent into future classes or this program? Is giving pretty people scholarships? Increasing notoriety despite lack of accomplishments? Is it justified by further sharing the value of entrepreneurship with the world?

People who are going to be successful will likely become so regardless of whether or not they attend this program.

One of Draper University's redeeming factors is that they provide an easy-in to America for international students - though they are not an accredited university.

Compare these experiences to those at a commensurate program at Singularity University (where tuition is free).

One of Singularity University's guiding questions is: "How will you affect 1 billion people in 10 years?"

Their projects tackle significant issues: world hunger through more affordable protein sources lower on

the food chain ([Should Vegetarians Consider Eating Insects?](#)), how to blanket cities in wifi, or how to make everything 3D-printed.

Singularity University was founded by some of the top thinkers of far future technologies including Ray Kurzweil, received $3 million from Google.

Draper University is backed by large family money, Tim Draper's ego, and articles like this: [Startup mogul's University of Heroes degree is a BA in BS](#)

Given enough money - anyone can look like a great investor if they only look at the wins.

> Get ten thousand people into a room and have them flip a coin 10 times in a row. One will get 10 heads in a row and go home to write a best selling book: how to be lucky by eating what I ate for breakfast this morning.

We attribute statistical inevitability to skill all the time. And that's okay, humans are optimistic: that's how we're alive. Just keep the Bitcoin company funded (and faltered) in mind too. http://two-bit-idiot.tumb

I haven't attended Singularity University but have many good friends who have, more though, that have commiserated on their unfortunate experiences at Draper U, but felt pressure not to share their experiences publicly for a variety of reasons.

Perhaps some of the most damning evidence is just watching *their own promotional material*.

https://vimeo.com/4818171

If it reminds you of summer camp - that's because it is very much like summer camp. Everything is mandatory. Even many games of monopoly night. If you miss more than 3 sessions, you are asked to leave the program.

I'm glad you're reading this as you're doing your research, I'm happy to share more as I've amalgamated a lot of feedback that otherwise fell on deaf ears during my session and many others.

Despite repeated attempts to share my thoughts in a thoughtful way in private and out of wanting to help, I feel little hope for them at this point, and now it's a matter of damage control. Hence this post.

I really, really, wanted to see them succeed.

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What to Do, Instead:

Visit https://www.facebook.com/

If you are an alum, ping this thread for ongoing support with how you intend to help the world - I'm helping pool resources from other disenchanted students who actually care about making a 10x difference.

Consider whether you want to be surrounded by people who are afraid of sharing how they actually feel about the program for fear of losing their scholarships or falling out of Tim or the admin's favor.

I am not alone in these feelings, and will gladly refer you to others who have experienced similar sentiments or go into more details if I know that you're a human and not with the draper admin. Message Alton on www.Facebook.com/AltonSun

If you have been living under a rock and have no access to the internet, live in a token foreign/poor country where Tim can feel good about importing you from, and if you can learn some basic buzzwords: maybe you too can score a scholarship to Draper University!

I suspect that despite their best intentions: this program currently appears to pander to the lowest common denominator - seeming most impressive to the least initiated. For this, I am grateful.

Since you're here - if you message me with

- How you intend to change the world in a meaningful and positive way
- 3 keyword groups you've been thinking about recently (mine are neural nets, community curation, recursive incentive structures to solve the tragedy of the commons)

If anything good has come of this; it's that I'm putting together a SV101 guide of how you could much better invest 9.5k and 2 months of your time in the Silicon Valley.

If you feel any of this is a mischaracterization of your experience at Draper University, *please* message me! I write this only out of desperation that others hopefully do not sacrifice some great opportunity cost through Draper's race to the bottom. (Though I wish it didn't have to be lyk dis; when I see great people pouring good money into unreceptive orgs... I'm concerned where interests really lay.)
I will gladly edit this post if it deserves better wording; but I will interpret you reading this as being complicity agreeing otherwise.

I really believed in what they claimed to stand for. I really wanted to see them succeed. I may be foolish but I still think there's a chance. **What I have written about their past is not as important as how it's responded to for the future.**

Everything below has been shared with explicit consent. If you feel like you would want to share something here with or through me, you can do so via fb or on this thread you can answer anonymously.

There's also onetimesecret.com

Also, thank you.

Alton Sun's answer: I attended Draper University and cannot in good conscience recommend it to others. My perception so far and after talking with many other students in subsequent classes is that this program purports itself to help you...

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e, Diego Bejarano Gerke and 2 others like this.

Alton Sun "It doesn't matter where you start. It does matter when you disenfranchaise and marginalize the feelings of students that wanted to see you succeed."
5 hrs · Like

Alton, thank you for writing this.
hrs · Like

While I agree with your entire answer I also have to say that for me to be reading and appreciating your response means we met as a result of the program and I find being connected to you as priceless... That's what the program meant to me. "Priceless". No price should be enforced for being a young entrepreneur enticed by 10x mentors.. but we all signed an agreement. #irony #10x #lol
4 hrs · Edited · Unlike · 👍 1

e Elle 10x

Nothing bad... I loved DU and would gladly do it again. But I see DU as a vacation from the real world, rather than any sort of life-changing messianic experience

and too many people I meet are init for the religion

hence "The Cult Of Draper"

Just finished

with which part? Reading the article, I remembered how much ambivalence I felt being at DU and seeing the people around me worship him. T

Sent from web

16:30

Yeah definitely, I'll let you kno

Sat 19:33

Thanks for saying what I have been thinking and too scared to write.

yes sure

✓ Seen Sat 20:33