Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University/Organization
Montana State University – Earth Sciences POD

This is what was found by Montana State University-Earth Sciences POD at Montana State University on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

- What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement\(^1\) is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available\(^2\)?

**For Faculty Position:**
The University has the following EEO statement in the Recruitment Handbook:

**EEO Opportunity in the Hiring Process**
The University guarantees equal opportunity in the hiring process by:

placing vacancy announcements and advertisements in electronic and appropriate recruitment sources as appropriate to the position;

stating MSU’s equal opportunity commitment in the vacancy announcements and advertisements; appointing committees to review, interview, and evaluate applicants;

conducting fair and impartial evaluations of candidates; and studying applicant flow statistics to ensure there is no adverse impact on protected class applicants.

The University takes positive, effective affirmative action to increase opportunities for protected class applicants for positions by:

ensuring that approximately 25% of the members of search committees are women and/or representatives of diverse populations as appropriate; advertising positions in enhanced

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\(^2\) https://careers.whoi.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/
\(^5\) https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html
recruitment sources as appropriate to the position; ensuring qualified protected class finalists are interviewed; and requiring justification if protected class finalists are interviewed but not hired.

The University also has an Affirmative Action Plan: https://wwwtest.montana.edu/hr/Montana%20State%20University%20Bozeman%20AAP%20-20Minorities%20and%20Women.pdf

The College of Letters and Sciences at MSU has a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion task force and a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion website for the College will soon be released. This website will include a Diversity Statement for the College.

Our most recent job announcement had the following Diversity Statement:

Montana State University values diverse perspectives and is committed to continually supporting, promoting and building an inclusive and culturally diverse campus environment. MSU recognizes the importance of work-life integration and strives to be responsive to the needs of dual career couples.

Montana State University is committed to providing a working and learning environment free from discrimination. As such, the University does not discriminate in the admission, access to or conduct of its educational programs and activities nor in its employment policies and practices on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, gender, age, political beliefs, marital or family status, pregnancy physical or mental disability genetic information, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation or preference. In support of the University's mission to be inclusive and diverse, applications from qualified minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities are highly encouraged.

Montana State University makes accommodation for any known disability that may interfere with an applicant's ability to compete in the hiring process or an employee's ability to perform the duties of the job. To request an
accommodation, contact the Human Resources Office, PO Box 172520, Montana State University, Bozeman MT 59717-2520; 406-994-3651; recruitment@montana.edu.

In compliance with the Montana Veteran's Employment Preference Act, MSU provides preference in employment to veterans, disabled veterans, and certain eligible relatives of veterans. To claim veteran's preference please complete the veteran's preference information located in the Demographics section of your profile.

MSU's Non-Discrimination Policy and Discrimination Grievance Procedures can be located on the MSU Website: www2.montana.edu/policy/affirmative action/.

MSU also has the following Statement on Diversity:
http://www.montana.edu/president/communications/diversity.html

Montana State University is committed to creating a culture of intellectual and personal growth. Because learning is enhanced when topics are examined from diverse perspectives and because individuals possess unique outlooks which reflect the world around us, Montana State University is dedicated to creating an inclusive community that embraces a rich mix in the composition of its student body, staff and faculty. The distinction in viewpoints that comes from differences in race, gender, age, language, socioeconomic status, religion, political affiliation and geographical background are appreciated and valued at MSU as important aspects of the campus community at every level and in every sector of the campus.

To this end, MSU welcomes international students and faculty and enthusiastically seeks engagement with peers from around the globe to expand our depth of understanding and share in the discovery of knowledge. MSU has an especially strong commitment to Native Peoples and actively engages in the development of social and educational initiatives to preserve the cultural integrity of all American Indian students, faculty and staff. MSU strives to advance the ideals of human worth and dignity for all by facilitating open discussion, supporting rational resolution of conflict and encouraging on-going examination of values

We discussed that our University’s Diversity Statement does not detail concrete actions to fulfill this commitment. We discussed this example of statement (from a non-academic organization) that we felt was better:
Inclusiveness is one of the four operating values that we expect every hire to demonstrate. We put substantial and ongoing effort into improving the diversity of our staff, and into ensuring that [organization] is a place people of all backgrounds can do their best work.

To this end, we have implemented a variety of policies for both our hiring practices and employees, including:

• We have structured our hiring process to center largely around blinded work trials, partly as an effort to mitigate the effects that conscious and unconscious bias can have on hiring decisions. We think this is a better way of hiring, as it focuses us on who can do the work best, rather than who interviewers happen to get along with. (We also do interviews, but they generally take place later in the process, and are only part of the picture.)

• To encourage applicants with a diverse array of backgrounds, we do our best to minimize application “requirements” which could deter capable individuals from applying. For example, we no longer list educational requirements that are not strictly necessary for performing a given role.

• We have an ongoing partnership with Jopwell, an organization that works to connect Black, Latinx, and Native American students and professionals with career opportunities, and we make additional efforts to proactively reach out to candidates from underrepresented backgrounds.

• We have worked extensively on our compensation system to ensure that it is principled and data-driven rather than negotiation-driven, and does not amplify systemic inequities. We also strive to be transparent with our staff about how salaries are determined, and we do our best to note the expected salary on job listings.

• We have flexible working hours, reimburse work expenses that will help individuals with their productivity, and take other measures to ensure that everyone can thrive here. We believe that many conventions of the workplace — for example, expecting regular in-person office attendance — are not necessarily important for all roles, and not necessarily compatible with prioritizing inclusiveness.

We encourage individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences to apply, and we especially encourage applications from people of color, self-identified women, and non-binary individuals who are excited about contributing to our mission.

**For Graduate School Admissions:**
Our Department Grad page does not have a statement on EEO or Diversity. We recently adopted a Diversity Statement for our Department (which includes the graduate program), but it is not yet posted on our website.
The MSU Grad School has an Equity and Inclusion webpage with a statement about commitment to diversity that recognizes that this is a “predominantly white institution” and that the Graduate Dean is committed to “take action to improve the experiences of all our graduate students, especially those that have social identities that are under-represented or marginalized in higher education”: https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/equity-inclusion/index.html

- Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?

**For Faculty Position:**

Job ads are posted on MSU hiring website. Beyond that it is up to the committee and individual faculty members to use their networks to disseminate the job ad.

The MSU ADVANCE training guide provides a list of recruitment outlets. See pg 53-60 of https://www.montana.edu/nsfadvance/documents/MSU_searchtoolkit_v5.0web.pdf

This is a potential resource at MSU: Diversity Recruitment Resources: https://www.montana.edu/hr/aa/advertise.html#diversity

Additionally, this training guide recommends that each hiring committee member personally find and contact at least 10 people and encourage them to apply.

**For Graduate Admissions:**

We mainly advertise admissions to our graduate program on our department’s website. We sometimes have a booth a certain conference (e.g., AGU). This year, the MSU Graduate School organized a “virtual” Grad Fair. Prospective students who attended this Grad Fair had their application fee waived. This increased our number of applicants. Otherwise, recruiting is up to faculty to seek out students from their network and/or advertise grant-funded positions through their network and via social media.
What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?

**For Faculty Position:**
In our most recent job ad, we required: CV, Cover Letter, Teaching Statement, Research Statement, and names of at least 3 references. We did not require actual letters of reference upon application, which is in-line with the best practices for eliciting more applications. We did include language about the value of diversity, which is in-line with best practices.

Our most recent job ad did list specific areas of teaching. This is not in-line with best practices, which recommend having a broad statement because statistically, women and minorities only apply when they meet 90% of criteria vs. white men apply when they meet 60%. Best practices also recommend not listing specific courses.

For a sample job ad, see pg. 12 of the MSU Guide for Broadening Search (ADVANCE): [https://www.montana.edu/nsfadvance/documents/MSU_searchtoolkit_v5.0web.pdf](https://www.montana.edu/nsfadvance/documents/MSU_searchtoolkit_v5.0web.pdf)

**For Graduate Admissions:**
Historically, we have required: MSU Graduate Application (forms + $60), Personal Essay, Identification of Prospective Advisor (recommended), 3 letters of recommendation, Transcripts (unofficial upon application, official upon admission), GRE. For International students language proficiency “may” be required.

In fall 2020, we waived the requirement for GREs due to COVID. We have discussed waiving GREs in the future and moving towards a holistic admissions process. We are reviewing alternatives to the GRE, including responses to the following questions which are currently being used by the MSU Chemistry and Biochemistry Dept in lieu of GRE scores (in addition to the Personal Statement):

1. What character trait or attribute do you think is one of the most important for a graduate student in chemistry or biochemistry?
2. What do you feel is currently the most exciting topic in chemistry or biochemistry, and why?
(3) Think of any concept you learned in one of your chemistry or biochemistry courses. Name the concept (in a few words or a short sentence). Examples might be “moles”, “titration”, “pH”, “electrophiles and nucleophiles”, “the Heisenberg uncertainty principle”, etc. Choose one of these examples or pick your own!

(b) Next we’ll ask you to explain this concept to someone who knows nothing about it. Choose an age level that your explanation will be appropriate for and let us know the age group.

Format for each question, answer in 250 words or less, single spaced, 11 point font.

We take additional inspiration from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry which made some innovative changes to their recruiting efforts this past year, including:

- The Department eliminated the GREs, and TOEFLs test scores. For all international applicants, we “interviewed” the applicants that seemed to be a good fit for the program. This worked out extremely well on many levels.
- The Department and the Grad School also provided application waivers to applicants that met the minimum requirements. To this end, the number of international applicants increased ~300%
- For the first time, international applicants were able to attend virtual recruiting events. Most of our current international student in this department’s program had to accept offers “site unseen.” This year, applicants from other countries had to ability to interact with the recruiting cohort, MSU faculty and graduate students.

These recruiting practices have aided in increasing a more diverse pool of applicants for the PhD programs in this Department

- How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric\textsuperscript{4,5} public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?

We are unaware of any formal process or rubric for evaluation of either faculty applications or graduate applications.

The Recruitment Handbook mentions “approved screening instruments”, but the link is dead.
Best practices suggest focusing on "inclusion" vs. "exclusion" when going through applications.

- Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?

**For Faculty Positions:**
The Department Head appoints a Hiring Committee (typically 3 tenured faculty; at least 1 female). This committee narrows down the applications and then conducts phone interviews with several applicants. This pool is typically narrowed down to three applicants for a campus visit. After the campus visits, then all tenured faculty, non-tenured faculty, and staff discuss all three applicants and make a list of strengths and weakness. This list of strengths and weakness is submitted to the Dean by the Department Head. The Dean makes the final decision.

The hiring committee members are supposed to attend an implicit bias training. (However, details of how/where to sign up were hard to find. It’s also unclear if this is still happening/actually happening).


Additionally, MSU offers trainings in diversity and implicit bias through the following:
Div 100, 110, 120 Courses
Safe Zone Training
Indian Education for All Training

Our Department has made it a goal for all faculty, staff, and graduate students to complete the trainings listed above.

Search Committee Training:
[https://www.montana.edu/hr/aa/tools.html](https://www.montana.edu/hr/aa/tools.html)

**For Graduate Admissions:**
Faculty who were identified by the student and/or our administrative staff as being potential advisors are notified in our online CollegeNet system. Faculty can then view the applications
and make notes regarding their decision to admit or decline students. Then, as an entire faculty, we discuss which students each faculty would like to admit. Due to limited funding, we typically cannot support more than ~1 student/faculty. We prioritize pre-tenure faculty for bringing on new students with Teaching Assistantships. There is a 4-person graduate committee that reviews the final set of recommendations and does a secondary check on applications and allocation of TA resources among faculty.

- **Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants?**
  - What is the process for changing it?

No, we have not had an outside consultant evaluate our hiring or admissions process.

- **Has your university or company implemented or considered strategies like cohort hiring, mentoring, dual career support and partner hires, re-visioning your work culture, or other considerations outlined in “Leveraging Promising Practices”**?

Our department did a “cluster” hire in 2013 with funding from Institute on Ecosystem (NSF EPSCoR grant) and NSF ADVANCE grant. Our department supported a dual career/partner hire in ~2019. MSU has emphasized the importance of dual career/partner hires as part of the ADVANCE grant.

Note: MSU received an NSF ADVANCE Grant ~2012. This website has a list of resources from that initiative:
[https://www.montana.edu/nsfadvance/formsresources/index.html](https://www.montana.edu/nsfadvance/formsresources/index.html)

- **What was your experience like going through hiring and/or admissions, start to finish?**

Experiences in our department during the last ~7 hires have contained some inappropriate language or actions. We may recommend training prior to our next hire.

In our weekly discussion, we discussed the following ideas:
- Can we create an “URGE” listserv - to advertise jobs among this network; only institutions that completed urge training can post jobs to this listserv
- Can we create an “URGE” cohort – so that when we make a new diverse hire, they have additional support outside of MSU
- Can MSU hire a cohort of diverse faculty
- Is there an NSF “ADVANCE-like” program that focus on faculty of color
- Get everyone who supports diversity to send a card to the new hire to let them know that they are glad to have them and here for support
- Also: cluster “admission” of grad students – is there a grant to support this?
- Focus on retention as much as recruitment

We also added the following questions:

- Is information on how to apply to a graduate department (apply to the department vs through a specific PI) clearly outlined on department/admissions websites? How might this impact applicant pools if it is not communicated?
  - We need to create and upload short “tutorial” videos that demystify the application process (e.g., in our department, students should identify and contact a specific faculty member/advisor; but in other programs, it may be that you just apply to the program, not the PI.)
- What institutional hurdles (i.e., qualifying exams) will students face once they are admitted, what are the consequences of stumbling on these hurdles, and what is being done to proactively provide support? How do these hurdles impact retention rates of BIPOC students/does this demographic data exist?
  - We need to discuss this.
- How much are graduate students paid, and is this a livable wage in Bozeman? Are graduate student wages communicated during the application process? How might wages and proactive communication about wages affect which students apply/accept/retain positions at MSU?
  - We do communicate the stipend in the offer letter. But with growing housing costs in Bozeman, it is real barrier to students. We would like to be able to offer more money. Several faculty with grants offer higher stipends, but our department does not control stipends for TAs. We are trying to put pressure on the Graduate School to increase TA stipends.