URGE Deliverable 5: Admission/Hiring Processes

This is what was found by UNC Marine and Geosciences at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

Note: We acknowledge this information is not always accessible to students and even staff. If you do not have access to this information, please reflect on your own experience and outline what admissions and/or hiring should be like to foster a diverse and inclusive community.

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\(^2\)?

Below are some examples of inclusion and diversity statements at both the university and department level. These were difficult to find, and ideally admissions and hiring should make these statements easier to find and make the font the same size as everything else on the page.

**General UNC diversity statement:** At Carolina, diversity and inclusion are about building understanding across differences, creating conditions to ensure the equitable educational and social benefits of diversity and cultivating an inclusive and supportive environment for undergraduate, graduate and professional students, faculty and staff – where every person feels valued and has an opportunity to add value. [https://www.unc.edu/diversity/](https://www.unc.edu/diversity/)

**Graduate Student diversity statement:** Diverse experiences, backgrounds, viewpoints, and contributions are key elements for the success of any enterprise. The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is committed to sustaining a diverse graduate student body and fostering a climate of inclusion and acceptance. We aim to contribute to the successful degree completion of each student through targeted academic and professional development programs. [https://graddiversity.unc.edu/](https://graddiversity.unc.edu/)

**Department of Marine Sciences Diversity Statement:** The Department of Marine Sciences supports the University’s core values encouraging diversity and equal educational and employment opportunities throughout the University community. These values are articulated in the University’s non-discrimination policy and by the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs. [https://marine.unc.edu/about-us/department/](https://marine.unc.edu/about-us/department/)

**E3P Diversity statement:** The Environment, Ecology and Energy Program embraces diversity as an ethical and social value. Our commitment derives from our collective purpose to prepare our graduates for leadership in an increasingly multicultural and global society. As a program, we are committed to inclusivity and diversity and our ongoing determination to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all faculty, students, staff, and guests of the program, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status. In doing so we unequivocally endorse the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s policy statement on non-discrimination. [https://e3p.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/](https://e3p.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/)

**Example of a postdoctoral job posting diversity statement:** The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer. All
qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a protected veteran.

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

https://marine.unc.edu/job-opportunities/

https://hr.unc.edu/careers/

Other strategies for reaching applicants:

- Through community colleges and HBCUs
- Through conferences (SACNAS, https://www.abrcms.org/)
- Twitter announcements tagging underrepresented groups in marine/geo sciences
  - https://blackinmarsci.github.io/
  - https://latinxmarinesci.com/index.html

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?

General requirements for admission to the UNC Graduate School:
https://gradschool.unc.edu/admissions/instructions.html

- Application fee (non-refundable $95.00)- there is opportunity for a fee waiver, but this is not made obvious.
- Transcripts (complete, not selected courses)
  - Current letters of recommendation
  - The email addresses of three recommenders are required within the application for electronic submission.
- Standardized test scores (GRE not required for Marine Sciences but can be added to the application)
- Statement of purpose- more specific statement questions
- Resume/CV
- Community Standards Questions
- Supplemental program information (any additional information or materials required by the program; must be uploaded within the application unless specified otherwise by your academic program.)
- TOEFL or IELTS score (no more than 2 years old) - minimum 7 (scale is 0-9)

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

From student/postdoc perspective - it was very dependent on the interview with one person (your PI) and maybe with input from the lab members. Evaluated based on “fit”.
Idea of having a rubric would be nice, but there is no one metric to guarantee success in grad school that could be put on there. Could be very prone to becoming subjective still.

- For grad student hiring - metric could be how many semesters of research were completed? (in class/outside of class) - but this could be limiting since it’s so hard to get the opportunities to do research
- Student interviews should have at least one person beside the PI in the room to evaluate if bias is playing into “fit”-based decisions. (This should be before the recruitment event)

Most of the decision is backed by the faculty. If the Faculty Advisor agrees to support the student, unless they will not be admitted according to the University’s requirements, they will be admitted.

We do not review every single application--this is mainly because of the structure of our department/admissions where a faculty sponsor is needed to guarantee funding for the student. There is not a lot of money to support students that do not have a faculty sponsor. Our current application does not necessarily identify underrepresented minority groups, so we may not know what identities we are excluding. The first wave of the application process has a lot to do with pedigree, so we may want to revamp how we approach applications.

We can encourage undergraduate students that may be interested in graduate school to apply for the GRFP so they have funding if they want to come here (and/or go to another institution). One idea could be to have our application include a research component (similar to the GRFP) that would allow us to look at students’ research interests to align them with students’ interests.

Have faculty update websites and research pitches so that students know what research is available.

Make the application clearer. Need to also have a unanimous process of selection, admission, etc. Update the admissions website for our department to outline how to apply, what you should do beforehand, etc. Need to outline the importance of talking with faculty prior to applying to graduate school.

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

The selection process in our department is generally done by the PI’s within the labs. Since a faculty sponsor is needed to support a student, the faculty do most of the recruiting and selection prior to the department giving a formal offer.

In normal (non-covid times) most people in the dept come out to say hello at least for part of the recruitment event.

Encourage prospective students to reach out to graduate students within the lab they may be joining to talk to discuss the lab environment, etc.

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

There is a process that was done in 2014 to review the department. There may be some recommended changes in this review to work on related to DEI initiatives and/or hiring processes. Will reach out to Marc Alperin in our department to see if we can have access to it.
There may be another review coming up, but it may not happen since our department is merging with other departments this coming year.

*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”?*

The University does sometimes cluster hires, but it is dictated by the College of Arts and Sciences/Provost/Administrative levels. Could be a good idea to pair student mentors/mentees (senior vs. junior graduate students). This could also be paired with the Entering Mentoring training.

Can potentially add some student, faculty, and staff awards to recognize accomplishments. This is something we can expand upon in our department. IMS has the Star Heel award which applies to any UNC IMS permanent employee. Employees are nominated by fellow IMS staff and the winner gets $250, a certificate, and their name added to a plaque in the main lobby. It is a reward for outstanding work at IMS over the previous year.