Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University/Organization - Llopiz Lab Pod

General comments and Discussion Question responses (besides those covered in deliverable), are provided at the end of this document.

Deliverable

This is what was found by Llopiz Lab pod at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve. We also had input from a current graduate student at University of Washington (UW), a former of the Llopiz Lab. This session was also the one that WHOI's Biology Department chair Carin Ashjian attended, after being invited by our pod leader. She was able to provide added perspective on the recruitment, hiring, and admissions process in the department and WHOI-wide.

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.

1. What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?³⁴⁵⁶

WHOI

The standard statement at the end of each WHOI job advertisement:

*WHOI is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer/Disabled/Veterans/M/F. We encourage Veterans and those with Disabilities to apply. Applications are reviewed confidentially. Applicants that require accommodation in the job application process are encouraged to contact us at (508) 289-2253 or email eeo@whoi.edu for assistance.*

Also, on the main “Applying” page for the MIT-WHOI Joint Program there is the following:

² https://careers.whoi.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/
⁵ https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html
Diversity Statement

Increasing representation, having a diverse student body, and advancing inclusion are critical to the MIT-WHOI JP’s mission, and to the missions of both MIT and WHOI.

“A diverse student body is and has long been critical to the educational mission of MIT. We are committed to providing our students “with an education that combines rigorous academic study and the excitement of discovery with the support and intellectual stimulation of a diverse campus community.”” From https://mitadmissions.org/policies/#diversity

Increasing representation and advancing inclusion is critical to WHOI’s core mission of exploration and discovery in a diverse and connected world. “It is not enough to state that we believe in diversity, equity, and inclusion. We need to take action to create a culture in which the voices of all people are fully heard and fully included, because it is the right thing to do. There are many barriers facing people from traditionally marginalized groups. At WHOI, we are committed to identifying and removing those barriers for richer academic discussion and a healthier research community.” From https://www.whoi.edu/who-we-are/about-us/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/

University of Washington (UW)

The following is an example from the recently filled Diversity Specialist job posting at the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences

“Applicants considered for this position will be required to disclose if they are the subject of any substantiated findings or current investigations related to sexual misconduct at their current employment and past employment. Disclosure is required under Washington state law.

Committed to attracting and retaining a diverse staff, the University of Washington will honor your experiences, perspectives and unique identity. Together, our community strives to create and maintain working and learning environments that are inclusive, equitable and welcoming.
The University of Washington is an affirmative action and equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, age, protected veteran or disabled status, or genetic information.

To request disability accommodation in the application process, contact the Disability Services Office at 206-543-6450 or dso@uw.edu.

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

**WHOI**
- For student recruitment, there is a big push to focus on recruitment instead of relying on reputation
- Ex: someone thought you had to be invited to apply, which is concerning. Working on debunking these concerns
  - Could stem from feeling that you need to know someone for your application to be taken seriously. Some truth to this.
  - WHOI often hires postdocs so this may lead to this feeling

**UW**
- Asked administrator who posts positions (Sam Scherer), waiting to hear back. Didn’t hear back after 1 week but did hear from a different administrator that positions are not posted widely, mostly within networks and by passive recruitment (i.e. people who know to check out our website). Student on recent faculty hiring committee in department didn’t know where most are posted. Although certain jobs are posted through USA Jobs website.

**Additional ideas/ action items regarding recruitment**
- There is a huge role for having someone in the institution as a mentor in order to optimize and tailor application materials to the institution. A good example is reading application materials
  - This can also be seen at the postdoctoral scholar process, though less pronounced than with students
Important question: what are all the ways for getting BIPOC students in the door at WHOI?

○ Can include higher WHOI representation at meetings such as SACNAS

Ex: Was able to reach out to people making hiring decisions during first job in marine science field through connections with people at the institution. Important to give advice and recommendations for people on how to build connections that lead to getting positions

Ex: Recent hiring position included contact information so they may get more inquiries

Often times the PI already knows who they are going to hire and applications can be a formality required by the institution

○ WHOI did more for onboarding than a comparable institution in one pod members experience

UW started putting out information on website about how to contact potential advisors and other application advice

○ Can be losing a lot of diverse applicants through the emailing process. Implicit bias may play a role in likelihood of advisors responding to these emails. A lot of unmonitored bias can occur in this process

○ Maybe a web based portal for inquiry? Leading to a track record of following up with students and leads to transparency.

JP ASK has a similar goal of clearing up the application process, but is specific to the JP

○ Include right information on the webpage (eg including a blog post)

Ex: REU university provided application and GRE training which was helpful

○ Include something online about how to write these emails (we can do this on JP ask website)

SSF summer has an info session and panel. But likely less than larger universities. FOLFE lab has multiple lab meetings during the summer to discuss this.

○ Could combine the Woods Hole institution summer students to get enough people for a large information session (such as a paid speaker that could talk about general grad school advice vs. specific experiences of JP students)

3. 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?

WHOI
- For grad students: letters of recommendation, GRE scores (although these are not required during COVID, TBD in the future), statements, transcripts. MIT-WHOI Joint program has the successful JP Ask program that is aimed at eliminating any barriers to applying to the graduate program by offering one-on-one guidance on the process. The website also seems to be very helpful to applicants.

UW
- For grad students:
  o GRE scores are no longer required for graduate admission
  o Letter of recommendation and transcripts are still required
  o Fee to apply (although waivers exist depending on financial aid status, income, etc.)
  o Video on website to guide applicants on how to apply (sending emails to advisors, etc)

For both institutions (and many others nationwide), there is no accountability on how or if prospective advisors respond to email inquiries from prospective student. This is the well-known way to initiate a successful application process, but it's the point where faculty members are acting alone, hastily, and, as Julie Possolet pointed out, with a lot of potential for bias. How can this important step in the grad school application process be less biased? Let there be a record of student inquiries to potential advisors, as well as a record of how the faculty member responds (and if they respond).

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

WHOI
For student recruitment, there is a big push to focus on recruitment instead of relying on reputation.
Ex: someone thought you had to be invited to apply, which is concerning. Working on debunking these concerns
  o Could stem from feeling that you need to know someone for your application to be taken seriously. Some truth to this.
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For faculty hiring, the Biology Dept has developed a rubric ("the matrix") for evaluating candidates. Unfortunately, the use of it is optional. It is also probably too large—and thus arduous—resulting in even less use of it.

UW
- Not sure about staff/post-doc/student hires, but for faculty there is a DEI Hiring Tool and rubric. Though it’s not always used, unfortunately, to our knowledge.
- Not sure if applicant names are removed?

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

WHOI
- For faculty in the Biology Department, there is a hiring committee consisting of (usually) three standing members that rotate off after 3 yrs, and 3 members that have expertise related to the subdiscipline of the applicants. We’ve recently discussed having a broader search next time where we don’t prescribe what subdiscipline we’re looking to hire in, thereby hoping to enhance our chances of having a larger number of underrepresented applicants.
- Thus far the hiring committee seems aware of the potential for unconscious bias and even discrimination. However, there is no formal training required of the committee members, and they are not briefed by anyone at the beginning of the process about the importance of considering diversity or the potential for bias and discrimination to exist in the process of evaluating and selecting candidates.
- Depends on the position
- For faculty hires, the search committee consists of other faculty members, at least one student representative, and staff/post-doc representatives. Ultimately the other faculty, and then the dean make the final decisions. Students, however, interact with applicants during a closed-doors conversation and students can use that opportunity to share their thoughts about the applicants with the search committee and faculty voting on the hiring decision.

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

**WHOI**
- Not as far as we can tell. Robert Livingston reported across Woods Hole research institutions but this was on the culture of the institutions and the community. A workplace climate survey has been conducted on a couple of occasions, and this was developed by outside consultants.
- We believe that WHOI is in the process of implementing substantial changes to the hiring process with regards to diversity and bias. HR has recently hired someone whose major responsibility (half of their time maybe?) is related to this.

**UW**
- Has not yet been evaluated by outside consultants, but our department has approved a proposal to have an outside consulting company come and evaluate DEI processes and policies in our department. We are awaiting final approval from the University, to my knowledge, and are planning to begin the external audit in the next year.

7. **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”?**

**WHOI**
- Mentoring program for new faculty and postdocs
WHOI has done some cluster hiring (as opposed to cohort hiring), but this occurred in other departments outside of Biology at WHOI. And the “cluster” was really individuals studying the same general topic (climate change), and was not focused on increasing diversity.

Recently, each department has been tasked with developing a list of potential hires that would specifically increase the diversity of its faculty, with the idea that top candidates could be targeted for recruiting to come to WHOI.

Dual career is somewhat considered. There are a couple specific examples of it happening.

UW
- No cohort hiring to my knowledge but perhaps have just not yet seen/found an example
- Apparently little dual career support, but this is anecdotal evidence
- There is a student-led Peer Mentoring Program. Any grad student can sign up for and second year or above students can volunteer to mentor and be matched with a mentee

[End of deliverable]

General Comments:
- People tend to avoid conflict throughout discussions (including in our own ground rules), but this plays a role in admission and hiring, potentially leading people to not speak up when needed
  - Has the benefit of a positive department culture in some regards, but it allows for people and actions to go undiscussed or ignored when they need to be sorted out/corrected. This is especially true during admissions and hiring decisions
  - Managing these situations can be difficult

Discussion questions
- What was your experience like going through hiring and/or admissions, start to finish?
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- Ex: Transition to hiring was fairly fluid due to experience as a summer student (SSF). Made the importance of such internships clear and thus having diversity at these levels is important
  - Did not notice difficulties with HR during hiring process
    - CDI is looking into this process to make sure new highers are feeling comfortable and welcome
- Ex: Summer REU program helped in finding a position (even if at another institution)
- Ex: Pipeline can be exclusionary because jobs/hiring often comes from connections made throughout career, which starts early on
- Ex: Once started as an SSF, things happened fairly easily as far as admissions. Current position is also largely through connections. Advisor was able to write a recommendation letter effectively to address specific things in one’s resume. This higher level connection/mentorship is very helpful
- Recently been a shift in admissions discussions from having research experience to research potential in order to make things more equitable for those who had to work and were not able to volunteer for research
  - One effective idea would be to have specific questions (as readings suggest) for personal statements to avoid benefits of tailoring letter from experience mentorship
  - A lot of this information can come out of recommendation letters (seeing the potential of the student)
- Ex: The research experience of applicants has been increasing lately, formerly was not expected. Had research experience in an unrelated lab, but did not focus on writing. Had some research experience and at sea experience, but did not have mentorship for applications. Junior members of department play large role in admissions and applications process. Application pools (years ago) were not very diverse. Postdoc scholars used to get hired directly on staff, but this is no longer the case. Did not notice strong gender issues during processes, but grad student advisor was a woman which may have played a role.
  - WHOI has required course and textbook listings for graduate students and postdoc scholars for some time.
- Ex: Friends who are people of color seem to have more difficulties and apparent biases at this point in time than is noticed among women (at least for a couple pod members)
  - Part of this is likely due to lacking a critical mass if people of color at higher levels
● Who is on your hiring and/or admissions committees? Who interfaces with applicants?

See notes above.

● Does your organization make their hiring/admissions policies public? Are they reviewed?

See notes above. Department of one member at UW recently put on a presentation on the faculty hiring process, after students requested this, which was much appreciated by many of the students and extremely informative. Otherwise, many recruitment and hiring processes are not made publicly available to those in the department, or to the general public, besides general university-wide policies.