The following document describes what was found by the UARK Geosciences URGE pod at the University of Arkansas on Hiring and Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

As part of our research for UA hiring and admissions policies, we outlined the procedure, to the best of our knowledge, for the hiring processes in our department for faculty and admissions for graduate students. At each step, we discussed the potential for barriers and the introduction of bias into the process, as well as some preliminary ways to address these issues.

What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available?
"The University of Arkansas seeks to attract, develop and retain high quality faculty, staff and administrators that consistently display practices and behaviors to advance a culture and climate that embeds inclusion, diversity, equity, and access. For more information on diversity and inclusion on campus, please visit: Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

The University of Arkansas is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution. The university welcomes applications without regard to race/color, sex, gender, pregnancy, age, national origin, disability, religion, marital or parental status, protected veteran or military status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law."

Associated links:
https://oeoc.uark.edu/recruitment-information/diverse-recruitment-resources/index.php
https://hr.uark.edu/documents/posters/equal_employment_opportunity_is_the_law.pdf

Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?
University job site: https://uasys.wd5.myworkdayjobs.com/UASYS

Advertisements for faculty hires are posted at on the department new feed and the university job site. Advertisement is typically posted on EOS and GSA Today. Recent hires were posted on
the websites of NABG and SACNAS although the cost of SACNAS advertisements has been a hindrance in the past.

Student opportunities for GRAs are advertised by the individual advisors and it is left to them to determine where they will advertise. GTA's are not explicitly advertised but when a student applies, they are requested to indicate if they would be interested in funding.

**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?**

Requirements for admissions include 1) three letters of recommendation, 2) transcript, 3) GRE scores, 4) personal statement, 5) CV, 6) completion of the equivalent BS Geology degree at the Univ. of Arkansas, 7) minimum GPA of 2.75 (graduate school limit, all applicants with <2.75 that the department wishes to admit will be admitted on a probationary level and paperwork must be filed describing how the department will monitor the students' progress.

GREs are a financial barrier, BS Geology degrees can be a barrier to students entering without a traditional geology degree in that they will be required to make up the core geology courses not on their transcript.

In the case of international students, English proficiency test is required and if below a certain standard, a student can still be admitted as long as s/he is not required to perform student instruction in the first semester of arrival (they may be allowed to be a grader or perform other tasks that are not “face-to-face” with students. The student will need to attend a language proficiency class before starting TA activities that require instruction. Such extra coursework can become a barrier for admission depending on the source of funding available to the student.

**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?**

**Graduate Student Admissions:**

While student candidates are evaluated by the graduate committee, the recommendation by a potential adviser carries tremendous weight. Hence, if a faculty member says, "I have RA funding" or "I need a TA and I want this person," it often is the reason a student gets admitted. This definitely biases toward high-information applicants. The faculty member's evaluation of the few students applying to work with them is *not* transparent. Often students requesting to work with junior faculty who have not yet secured funding are given preference for open TA slots.
A potential source of bias introduced in 2020 was the temporary waiver of GRE scores for admission to graduate programs but no GRE waiver for competitive scholarships within the University. In other words, students that voluntarily submitted GRE scores and qualified to compete for university funding might have had an advantage in securing funding over a student equally qualified that lacked the GRE scores requirement to apply for external (to the department) funding. There is no explicit rubric to evaluate statements or recommendation letters. Grades in the form of GPA are often ranked based on the last 60 credit hours. GREs are ranked via percentile ranking. This evaluation, since it is not formalized in any rubric and is often subjective based on the MS, PhD coordinators and TA selection committee chair, is very inconsistent from year to year.
Potential stages in the graduate recruiting process where biases could be introduced include self-selection, selection based on prestige, and “who knows who.”

Strategies we are exploring to address these barriers include adding a ranking system for recommenders that ask the recommender to rank the student based on valued characteristics such as perseverance, addition of prompts to the personal statement, and removal of the GRE as a requirement. The first two options are doable, however, there is significant push back from the graduate school to eliminate the GRE. Also, the GRE is required for most internal Graduate School fellowships. These requires are provided by private donors and we cannot change their request.

**Faculty Hires:**
The job description is written by the search committee. The search committee chair and members are assigned by the chair of the department. Once a job description is written, it is approved by the College and the OEOC. An example of a typical job description can be found in Appendix 1.

Once approved, the search committee will initiate their search by sending the job advertisement to outlets such at GSA Today and Eos. Additional outlets that have been used include NABG and SACNAS although the price of SACNAS advertisements has been a challenge. Individuals of the faculty sometimes send the job advertisement to other personal contacts that might be interested or know people that are interested. Once applications are due, the committee reviews cover letters, CV, statements of research, teaching and (new in the past year) service statements. Applicants are ranked based off of these categories, with research typically being the highest values category. Rubrics have been used in the past but such action is left to the committee chair and committee so it has not been applied equally across the department over the years.

Once a long list is created, recommendations letters are requested and those not within the long list are eliminated from consideration. Justification for these actions must be provided to the OEOC and a justification form is completed for each candidate. After recommendation letters are received and reviewed, the committee reviews the letters and narrows the long list to a short list of 3-4 applicants that are then offered an interview over the course of 1-2 days. Those not on the short list are removed from consideration and again, justification must be provided to OEOC.
for these actions. This interview is composed of meetings with the faculty one-on-one, meeting with the dean of research and the college, meeting with students for a meal, a research talk (45 min) and an evening mixer. In the past couple of years we have also arranged for the candidate to meet with a realtor to review the housing market within Fayetteville and surrounding area.

After the interview, the faculty as a whole, with input from the search committee and student representatives, will rank the applicants and the top-ranking applicant will be provided with an offer.

Areas of potential bias within this process: 1) assignment of committee – the value system of the committee can create bias, 2) dissemination of the ad – perpetuates privilege, 3) initial ranking – current process is not transparent.

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

**For Graduate Student Admissions:**
The selection committee for MS TA funding is a group of 6 TT faculty at different career stages. There is no official MS admissions committee. The admissions is left to the MS coordinator and the chair. This is obviously a source for bias as selection for admissions can be left to only 1-2 people, especially if the applicant has not made contact with any faculty members. For PhD, since students can only be admitted with funding, the selection committee is the same as the admissions committee. The potential adviser and MS or PhD coordinator interacts with
students. Although we run a prospective student event, this is after students are accepted (typically, but not always).

Overall our selection is vague depending on who is on the various committees. A ranking is made, first selection is given to junior faculty who need students. From there the ranking based on grades and GRE scores are offered positions. If a student is under RA funding, the advisor is the one who makes the final decision.

**For Faculty Hires:**
The faculty search committee is assigned by the department chair. The Chair will select a committee chair to be the main point of contact for the applicants. The committee will work to rank the applicants to the short-list stage. From there, the entire faculty is involved in the selection of interviews and final ranking based on a rank vote. Besides the search committee chair, once offers are made, the main point of contact is the chair of the department.

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

**For Graduate Student Admissions:**
No. Changes in the evaluation procedure can be conducted by the department. However, certain components, such as the GRE, are set by the graduate school.

**For Faculty Hires:**
No. Changes in the evaluation process of faculty hires are set by OEOC. OEOC procedures (evaluation based on required and preferred qualifications) are set at the college level and decisions must be justified to the OEOC.

**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”?**

**For Graduate Student Admissions:**
Over the past year (2020 to 2021), the graduate students within the department have initiated a student-run mentorship program. This program is meant to provide undergraduate and 1st-year graduate students mentorship and comradery. The goal is to provide support in grant-writing, graduate school applications, and departmental culture. The group will provide mentor profiles for mentees so that the mentees can select a student that best fits with their needs.

https://uark.sharepoint.com/teams/GeoscienceStudentMentorshipProgram
The Graduate School has implemented the Razorgrad Institute for Success and Engagement (RISE) program. The RISE is a week-long program designed to invest in promising new graduate students from historically underrepresented populations in graduate school (African American, Hispanic or Latinx, American Indian and Alaskan Native, and first-generation) during the transition into graduate education on our campus.

https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/graduate/current-students/student-support/riise-program.php

For Faculty Hires:
Partner hires are absolutely considered (for faculty - nothing of the kind for students). We did not find an explicit strategy – considered on a case-by-case basis without obvious strategy. (https://provost.uark.edu/spousal-hiring.php). For the dual, partner, and cohort hires, our procedure is to make a case to the Dean of the college and the administration more broadly.
The Department, in the past two years, has started an informal mentoring program for new faculty in an effort to provide support in their transition to faculty life, integrating in the department, as well as the community. The new faculty member selects 1-3 faculty mentors within the department and can include mentors from the larger college. This mentorship group is dissolved at the end of the year to allow the faculty mentee to re-engage with the committee in a new way depending on their needs.

The University has also piloted a “Bridge Program” for new faculty hires. This department-level program entails (1) creating welcoming teams and, subsequently, mentoring teams, and (2) a set of welcoming (pre-boarding/onboarding) and mentoring activities for all new full-time faculty members. The Bridge Program’s goal is to provide “equal access to the benefits associated with good mentoring” and structural support to all new faculty, especially faculty from historically underrepresented groups and all marginalized faculty. To ensure the faculty’s successful integration into their units and the UA campus, the Program assists new faculty with (1) navigating our campus and its culture, (2) integrating into the home unit, college, university, and local communities, and (3) embarking on activities (e.g., instruction, scholarship) that are central to the faculty’s success and their career. In 2020, the UA received an NSF ADVANCE grant and the piloted Bridge Program will be included among the deliverables of the grant. With funding from the ADVANCE grant, the Program will be rolled out across the campus. The Department of Geosciences has already committed to participate in this program.

Appendix 1: Most Recent Job Announcement

About the University: Founded in 1871 as a land grant institution, the University of Arkansas is classified by the Carnegie Foundation among the top two percent of universities in the nation, with the highest level of research activity. Ten colleges and schools serve more than 27,100 students with more than 200 academic programs. University of Arkansas students earn nationally competitive awards at an impressive rate and represent 50 states and more than 120 countries.

About the College: The University of Arkansas is committed to providing an educational and work environment in which thought, creativity, and growth are stimulated, and in which individuals are free to realize their full potential. The J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences promotes these ideals and welcomes applicants who foster an inclusive environment through an open exchange of voices and ideas from populations of diverse backgrounds.

About the Department: The Department of Geosciences, with 22 faculty, is an interdisciplinary program offering bachelors and masters degrees in geography and
geology, and a Ph.D. in Geosciences (http://geosciences.uark.edu). The Department also participates in two interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs in Environmental Dynamics and Space and Planetary Sciences. The Department is closely affiliated with the Center for Advanced Spatial Technologies (https://cast.uark.edu/), Tree-Ring Laboratory, Arkansas Water Resources Center, the University’s Stable Isotope Laboratory (https://isotope.hosted.uark.edu/), MicroCT Imaging Consortium (https://micro.uark.edu/) and Trace Element and Radiogenic Isotope Laboratory (https://icp.uark.edu/).

Summary of job duties: The Department of Geosciences at University of Arkansas invites applications for a 9-month tenure-track Assistant Professor of Hydrogeology with an anticipated start date of August 2020. We seek an outstanding individual with skills in hydrogeology and expertise that supports a combination of the University’s three signature research areas (https://researchfrontiers.uark.edu/signature-research-areas/). The successful candidate will be expected to develop an independent, externally-funded research program and complement ongoing collaborative and interdisciplinary research in the Department of Geosciences and the University. Teaching duties may include introductory hydrogeology, field camp, and upper division undergraduate or graduate courses in the candidate’s field of interest.

Minimum qualifications: A doctoral degree in geology or a related discipline conferred by the start of employment. A demonstrated ability to teach hydrology or hydrogeology at the senior/graduate level and additional graduate courses and demonstrated ability to develop an independent, externally funded research program.

Preferred qualifications: Research that incorporates aspects of field-based hydrogeology. A publishing record in refereed journals and demonstrated funding capabilities. Preference will be given to applicants who will complement or enhance the existing research and teaching areas of the Department of Geosciences and affiliated centers and programs. Relevant research sub-fields include (but are not limited to): groundwater availability and water quality, contaminant hydrology, ecohydrology, Critical Zone hydrology (both surface and subsurface), hydrogeologic system response to evolving climate regimes, and the impact of humans and climate on the water cycle.

Application information: For a complete position announcement and information regarding how to apply, visit http://******

To be considered for the position, applicants must submit a cover letter/letter of application, a curriculum vita and three statements, each less than 2 pages long. First, a research statement should describe the candidate’s research program, and research
priorities as a faculty member. Second, a teaching statement should describe the candidate’s teaching background and philosophy, as well as priorities as a faculty member. Third, an inclusion statement should focus on how the applicant plans to foster inclusiveness, contribute to an equitable scholarly community, and help students from diverse backgrounds succeed. A list of three professional references (name, title, email address, and contact number) willing to provide letters of reference will be requested during the application process. The letters should address the research and teaching experiences of the applicant. Letters will be requested from the references provided for all finalists selected for an interview. All applications must be submitted electronically at https://*****. Questions regarding this position (but not applications) may be addressed to the committee chair, Dr. John **** (*****@uark.edu). Completed applications received by September 1, 2019 will be assured full consideration. Late applications will be reviewed as necessary to fill the position.

The University of Arkansas is an equal opportunity institution committed to achieving diversity in its faculty. Therefore, the University is especially interested in applications from qualified candidates who would contribute to the diversity of our academic departments. The University welcomes applications without regard to race/color, sex, gender, pregnancy, age, national origin, disability, religion, marital or parental status, protected veteran or military status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law. Persons must have proof of legal authority to work in the United States on the first day of employment. All applicant information is subject to public disclosure under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.