Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for the School of Earth & Environmental Sciences, University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, Minneapolis, MN

This is what was found by UMN Eclogite Pod at the University of Minnesota -Twin Cities on Hiring and Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod proposes to change and improve.

Note that for admissions, we considered graduate admissions as well as activities related to recruiting undergraduate students to the Earth Sciences and Environmental Geosciences majors in our department.

- 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\(^2\)?
  - All UMN websites have a footer stating “The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.”
  - Undergraduate
    - n/a
  - Graduate
    - Department level: none
    - University level (Graduate School): no clear EEO statement. Link to Diversity page in navigation menu, but no clear EEO statement found there
  - Admin and Technical Staff, Faculty
    - Department level: We can customize (to some extent) the University text on this; any proposed wording is subject to review/approval. Text from the last search is as follows: The University of Minnesota values a diverse faculty, which fosters a richness of perspectives and an inclusive

\(^2\) https://careers.whoi.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/
\(^5\) https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html
environment, and whose members serve as role models for a diverse student body. The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The University supports the work-life balance of its faculty.

- University level
  - Boilerplate EEO’s on all job advertisements: The University recognizes and values the importance of diversity and inclusion in enriching the employment experience of its employees and in supporting the academic mission. The University is committed to attracting and retaining employees with varying identities and backgrounds.
  - Link to diversity page found on “Find a Job” page (https://humanresources.umn.edu/find-job/diversity), which includes:
    - The University of Minnesota provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. To learn more about diversity at the U: http://diversity.umn.edu.

- Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?
  - Undergraduate
    - Word of mouth in undergraduate general ed courses + some instructors actively try to attract students to the major by talking about career opportunities, research opportunities etc.
    - Various events such as majors/minors exploration fairs for prospective and current students
    - ESCI Career Fair, operating since 2019
    - Website, including a recently-added page on ‘If you are interested in X, consider geo-X’ (with examples, other information); X = chemistry, physics, biology, data-science, computation
    - “Make Earth Science Accessible” (MESA) initiative, which makes education and research material available in and around the department’s building.
    - Stickers, temporary tattoos, posters, video wall, social media
  - Graduate
- Faculty research webpages; some individual faculty may advertise opportunities in their field, e.g. if they have a new grant

- Existing strategies for increasing diversity of applicants:
  - Diversity Recruitment Toolbox managed by UMN Grad School: [https://grad.umn.edu/diversity/faculty-staff-resources/recruitment-toolkit](https://grad.umn.edu/diversity/faculty-staff-resources/recruitment-toolkit)
  - We discontinued using the GRE in 2019, instituted grad applicant fee waivers for some domestic applicants, and offer a ‘grad start-up’ fellowship of $2000 to all new students.
  - Department nominations of applicants for UMN DOVE fellowships (Diversity Of Views and Experiences).
  - Participation of department in AGU Bridge Program.
  - Department/Graduate School funding for travel by faculty and students to Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) and for the grad program director to make recruiting visits to MSIs on the west coast and upper midwest (delayed by pandemic)
  - Proposal for new REU program partially based at UMN recently awarded.

- Admin and technical staff
  - No specific procedures in place beyond the information available on the UMN employment system website regarding equal opportunity

- Researchers and Faculty
  - Website
  - Discipline-specific email listservs (e.g., Geotectonics, Physical Properties of Earth Materials, EarthScope, Meeting of Young Researchers in Earth Science, etc.)
  - For faculty: societies, journals, and job-boards: GSA, AGI, AGU, AISES, AWG, AWIS, EAG, EGU, Earthworks, NABG, SACNAS, Chronicle of Higher Education

- 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?
  - Undergraduate: admissions is out of our hands; we try to recruit any student admitted to the university/college to the ESCI majors
  - Graduate
    - [https://www.esci.umn.edu/programs/adminpolicy](https://www.esci.umn.edu/programs/adminpolicy)
    - Bachelor's degree in geology, geophysics or in the broad field of earth and material sciences. However, applications from students in fields such as chemistry, physics, biology, or environmental science are also strongly encouraged.
- Transcripts required. “Outstanding academic record” expected but not defined.
- Faculty member must agree to act as advisor; action item: add text to website indicating this and encouraging communication with a potential advisor.
- Statement of purpose; action item: be more clear about this, perhaps by providing several prompts, not just a general instruction to provide a statement.
- Three letters of recommendation
- Optional diversity statement
- Minimum TOEFL or IELTS for international students
- Optional CV items (abstracts, publications, etc.)
- Application Fee: $75 domestic (can be waived), $95 international (https://grad.umn.edu/admissions/application-instructions/application-fees)
- Key access-improvement strategies currently in place:
  - No GRE
  - No minimum GPA. GPA not mentioned on website
  - Fee Waiver via McNair or Big Ten at university level. Fee Waiver direct from the department available via these instructions on the grad program webpage: ...requests for an application fee waiver should be sent by email to <esci.umn.edu> with a brief statement explaining your situation. Attach to that email a transcript (an unofficial one suffices) and, if applicable, copies of recent financial aid awards or similar evidence for financial need. Any questions about fee waivers are welcome.
  - Admin/Staff/Postdoc: these vary with the position and are listed for each job, typically as qualifications and preferred qualifications in terms of degrees, expertise, including job experience
  - Faculty: CV, statements (research, teaching, DEI), cover letter, names of 3 potential letter writers; PhD at time of appointment is required.

- 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?
  - Undergraduate - we will take any students who meet collegiate requirements
  - Graduate - initial holistic review by graduate studies committee; final say is by potential advisor, as they provide substantial funding for their students; action item: add the information on our website that the review is holistic; we can also have more intentional discussion by faculty and grad studies committee about the value of different student backgrounds (e.g. w.r.t. life/work experience)
  - Admin/Staff/Postdoc - varies with position
  - Faculty - initial holistic review by search committee, which includes a current graduate student and at least one person from outside the department as well as (typically 3-4 department faculty; any tenure-line faculty member can also review any application and provide feedback; search committee proposes long list, this
is discussed, and, via discussion and feedback, reduced to the short list (interviewees). The process for searches used to be determined mostly by the search committee chair, typically following department ‘traditions’, but has been documented for the past two searches, including initial discussion by faculty of the proposed process for the search (before any applicants are considered). A new document has been produced as part of this URGE session review, describing in detail each stage of the search process.

- We do not use rubrics, which may provide a false sense of transparency and imply a systematic approach although each category in a rubric may be associated with the same issues of ‘discretion’ that occur with a non-rubric approach. Nevertheless, it is important to discuss criteria and the ways in which bias may affect evaluation, so that evaluations are as fair as possible.

- Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?
  - Undergraduate: we will take any students who meet collegiate requirements. Interactions are with faculty, TAs, and staff, especially the undergraduate studies committee.
  - Graduate: the graduate studies committee serves as the admissions committee and consists of faculty from a range of disciplines and career stages; the final say is with the advisor, within parameters specified by the grad committee about number of students (all students are guaranteed support, so the number admitted involves consideration of the advisor and department). Interaction between prospective and current students is encouraged.
  - Admin/Staff/Postdoc: it depends on the position: for some admin staff, the department administrator and department head make the decision; for research staff, the supervisor/center; for postdocs: the supervisor.
  - Faculty: the ultimate decision is the dean’s, based on a recommendation from the department head, which typically reflects the faculty recommendation of at least two candidates (although, 10+ years ago, the dept head on occasion went against faculty preference); the faculty recommendation is by vote of the tenure-line faculty, with an attempt to reach consensus about the top ~2 candidates through discussion. Graduate student opinion is also considered (typically, the grad rep to the search committee organizes this and presents it to the faculty for consideration as part of the discussion.) Applicants who interview interact with many people in the department, including all faculty, many grad students, and some undergrads, researchers, and staff, as well as personnel in the Dean’s office.

- Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?
  - Graduate - no, but we had a ‘diversity roundtable’ visit in fall 2019 and make recommendations, including 3 key ones (no GRE, fee waiver, grad start-up
fellowship), all of which we have implemented. The process for changing would involve discussion by the faculty; the proposed change could come from the graduate studies committee, any other faculty member, or students.

- Admin/Staff/Postdoc - no
- Faculty - no, but the College has oversight of search processes, an associate dean meets with all search committees and only approves an interview list once it has been submitted and viewed in the context of demographic data for all applicants. Departments have broad discretion in how the search is run. For example, some departments in the College of Science & Engineering give search committees the authority to recommend the final candidates to the department head. In our department, all tenured and tenure-track faculty participate in this decision. Changing the process would involve discussion by the faculty.

- 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”?
  - Graduate - there is a Grad School program (Diversity of Views and Experience Fellowship) for admitting cohorts of 6+ to provide support for underrepresented groups, but our department has never met the criteria for this cohort admission.
  - Admin/Staff/Postdoc - no
  - Faculty -
    - Twice in the last 8 years we hired two faculty at once, both times including women and/or URM;
    - We have a robust mentoring program that is part of our official P&T documents and that we periodically review for improvements;
    - The department has made dual-career hires of faculty within the department, has provided a tenure home or research home for faculty with spouses in other departments, and has provided financial support (with help from the college and other U units) for non-faculty spousal career tracks or academic programs; we have not explicitly re-visioned the work culture, although this has changed in recent years with more diversity in the faculty and better departmental and UMN support for parental leaves.
    - The department has also created an onboarding document for new faculty (co-written by an assistant professor and the dept head) and instituted an onboarding meeting with the ESCI administrator to explain U systems (financial, HR, grants management etc.).

- What can we do better in the future?
  - Undergraduate: reconsider how we present the department in recruiting events and materials (videos, website); for example, in events/videos, the director of undergraduate studies typically starts his introduction of the department and majors by mentioning field trips. This may be off-putting to students other than the traditional types of students we already successfully recruit. We could
emphasize more the aspects of the geosciences involving technology, data science, analytical work, and the importance of the geosciences for the environment. (Note that the focus of this description is on recruiting majors from among students admitted to the University; recruiting applicants to apply to the U with an interest in major in ESCI is a larger question.)

○ Graduate: We should:
  ■ say more in the webpages for prospective grad students about the nature of the review of applications (e.g., state that review is holistic);
  ■ add more specific prompts for the statement that is part of the application;
  ■ consider having some Zoom meetings in the fall for anyone who wants an overview of the department and application procedures;
  ■ encourage research groups to create videos or parts of their webpages that state a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion;
  ■ just as faculty search committees are required to participate in implicit bias awareness training, the grad studies committee could also have an implicit bias awareness ‘tune up’ each year prior to reviewing the applications.

○ Admin/Staff/Postdoc: as with other hiring, we can make sure that those with decision-making authority are trained in implicit bias and other aspects that are important for an equitable process.

○ Faculty:
  ■ Starting with the description of current faculty search procedures created as part of this URGE session, we should discuss the steps in the process that are flagged as involving ‘discretion’ and evaluate whether we can do more to reflect on and decrease bias.
  ■ We can also do more in terms of long-range planning for searches; for example, although we have a multi-year strategic plan with hiring priorities that describe research and teaching needs, we can also do more to be looking broadly at fields of interest, inviting diverse speakers among early-career scientists to give seminars, and participating in implicit bias awareness training (not just as-needed when a search is approved, but as a regular part of our annual training activities).