Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Nebraska - Lincoln

This is what was found by the EAS pod at UNL on Hiring and Graduate 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 available²?

  - Required tagline for advertising and all position announcements:
    - “As an EO/AA employer, qualified applicants are considered for employment without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation. See [http://www.unl.edu/equity/notice-nondiscrimination](http://www.unl.edu/equity/notice-nondiscrimination).”

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

  - Faculty positions (includes postdocs):
    - From UNL Equity and Institutional Compliance (EIC): “Advertisements for faculty/administrative positions are often posted in external publications at departmental expense. All ads must be approved by IEC prior to publication to ensure the following are included: (1) minimum and preferred qualifications; (2) a review of applications date; (3) the how to apply instructions; and (4) the required tag line (see below). The review date must be at least 30 days after the ad is published. Also, the qualifications listed in the ad must match the qualifications posted in the requisition. The position will not be posted until the proposed ad is submitted and approved. If the department wants to create new ads after the posting, the new ads must be submitted for approval prior to publication. Upon

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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
request, IEC will provide 50 free position announcements that can be used for recruiting.”

○ From CAS: “Advertising should be placed widely enough and in such publications that anyone in the field who is interested in the position is likely to see it. Advertising should be placed in publications which are intended for minority and female members of the profession.”

○ In EAS, search committee members are also encouraged to leverage professional contacts, by sharing the approved ad on relevant listservs, with colleagues, and at relevant conferences.

● Graduate student recruiting:
  ○ Advertising for graduate students is rare in EAS. Advertisements are dependent upon funding for recruiting available to individual faculty via grants and contracts. Such ads are subject to EIC overview.
  ○ EAS faculty are encouraged to leverage professional contacts and share opportunities on relevant listservs and at relevant conferences.

● 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?

● Faculty positions
  ○ It is up to the department search committee to determine what is to be included in an application. However, this undergoes review and must be approved by the EIC and the CAS Dean’s Office prior to placing ads. Historically, EAS has requested a cover letter, CV, statement of research, statement of teaching philosophy, and the names and contact information of three references. Letters from references are only requested for candidates who make the “long list.”
    ■ Our pod recommends that EAS consider requiring statements of diversity and inclusion from candidates.

● For graduate applicants
  ○ Office of Graduate Studies:
    ■ “An application and application fee ($25 for currently enrolled UNL students, $50 for others) are required for all degree, graduate certificate, visiting, endorsement and non-degree seeking applicants. The Office of Graduate Studies does not issue application fee waivers. Departments may elect to cover the cost of the application fee. Applicants must contact the program they are applying to in order to request an application waiver. Application fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.”
  ○ EAS faculty have noted that the application fee could be problematic for applicants from poorer nations. Faculty interested in promising applicants who are struggling to pay the fee should
approach the graduate chair and department chair about having the department cover the cost.

○ “Transcripts are required from each college-level institution attended, listing courses completed, marks earned, and degrees conferred. Upload your unofficial (electronic) transcripts as part of your application: have your official transcripts sent to Nebraska only after we ask for them.”

○ “A four-year U.S. bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college or university OR an equivalent degree as evaluated by the Office of Graduate Studies.”

○ “If a student’s native language is not English, verification of English proficiency is required.” Approved tests include TOEFL (score of at least 550 (pBT) or 79 (iBT)) and IELTS (score of at least 6.5). Due to the COVID pandemic, Duolingo tests (minimum score 110) are acceptable Feb. 3, 2020 – April 15, 2021. All scores are valid for two years.

● EAS also requires that applicants submit a Statement of Purpose and three letters of reference. Applicants may attach other materials to their application to highlight research accomplishments, awards, etc. To be accepted into the program, an advisor must be identified who agrees to serve in that role.

● EAS removed the GRE requirement, effective for the 2021 recruiting class.

● 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?

● Faculty positions

○ The EIC states that “The review of applications process needs to be thoroughly documented. The search committee must keep accurate records of the process through the creation of an applicant log. The applicant log will reflect the committee’s final decisions on the qualifications of all applicants.” That said, there is no universal standard procedure.

○ In recent years, EAS has adopted recommendations for recruiting faculty made by ADVANCE Nebraska: [https://advance.unl.edu/recruiting](https://advance.unl.edu/recruiting). In this regard, EAS search committees typically use a rubric that allows scoring of all minimum and preferred qualifications presented in advertising. The rubric ensures that all committee members spend time with each application and evaluate all parts of the application.

○ The rubric is not public. However, as stated above, results are compiled and submitted to the EIC for review in the form of an “applicant log.” The EIC will often ask the search committee for further explanation of reasons for decisions, especially in cases where short lists do not include women or people of color. The EIC may make this log, along with the meeting minutes of search committee meetings, available to an applicant under certain circumstances, for example in cases where an applicant feels that a rejection was due to bias.
- With regard to bias, search committee members must undergo training from the EIC, which includes training on implicit bias and how it may manifest in committee members, letters of reference, etc. Search committee chairs are encouraged to remind committee members about implicit bias on a regular basis.

- For graduate applicants
  - Applicants must meet minimum standards imposed by the Office of Graduate Studies. A department can petition to waive standards in special cases.
  - In EAS, all faculty are encouraged to view and comment on graduate applicants and, in particular, make note of students they are interested in advising.
  - The EAS Graduate Committee (see below, regarding selection committees) makes final decisions regarding admissions. Each person on the committee independently ranks each applicant in one of 4 tiers: high priority (those with RA offers plus the top candidates for TAs); a middle tier (good but not outstanding); low (admittable but low priority for funding); or reject due to no advisor or poor qualifications. The committee then meets to discuss and rank applicants, with the goal of consensus. EAS Graduate Committee recommendations are passed on to the chair.
    - The EAS faculty devised a template for letters of reference, which asks references to respond to specific questions regarding the potential for success in graduate school. We are currently working to have this embedded on the application site. We recommend adding a reminder to letter writers regarding implicit bias.
    - Our pod recommends giving applicants greater guidance on the application process, including the potential for providing a series of prompts for the Statement of Purpose. We’ll also ask that they identify a potential advisor.
    - We note that the evaluation process is difficult, as rankings must account not only for numerical data (e.g., GPA), but also more subjective criteria (e.g., letters of reference, for which the standard of writers varies significantly). Our pod recommends that EAS consider devising a rubric that will ensure that each applicant is reviewed in the same way.
    - Our pod recommends publishing the evaluation rubric on our website for applicants to see prior to submitting their application.

- Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?
- For faculty hires
  - EAS search committees are appointed by the department chair. Committees consist of 3-4 faculty and one graduate student. Members are chosen in a way that ensures that the search committee contains members with expertise in the discipline of the hire and is representative in terms of gender diversity, ethnic diversity, and a range of career stages. Search committees must be approved by the EIC.
  - Following on-campus interviews, all faculty meet with the search committee to discuss applicants. During this meeting, the search committee presents their
ranking and the reasoning for it. All faculty except for the department chair then votes by secret ballot. The department chair is the hiring authority. He or she then reviews the search committee recommendation and the faculty vote, and makes a final decision, which is submitted to CAS for approval.

- **For graduate applicants**
  - The EAS graduate committee makes final decisions regarding admissions.
  - The chair makes final decisions regarding departmental funding, based on a combination of committee rankings, available GTA positions, and area of expertise relative to open GTA positions. Where there are many high priority applicants, the chair may choose to direct departmental funding towards students proposing to work with tenure-track faculty.

- **Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**
  - This information could not be found.

- **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”**?
  - UNL has implemented strategies that include cohort hiring (with varied success) and dual career hires. The latter stems in part from ADVANCE-Nebraska (see below).
  - CAS has placed a priority on mentoring of new faculty and is in the process of requiring departments to present a mentoring plan.
  - ADVANCE-Nebraska (2008-2013) was an Institutional Transformation Grant from NSF, focused on recruiting and retaining women faculty in STEM disciplines. This project supported dual career hiring, leading to the successful recruitment of women in STEM fields. In addition, the project developed best practices to recruit and retain the best faculty and to promote a positive climate for all. It also supported innovative research, applying network analysis to STEM departments, and that research continues and has generated interest among other universities interested in identifying factors that impact faculty retention. More information, including best practices for recruiting and retention, is available at: [https://advance.unl.edu/advance-nebraska](https://advance.unl.edu/advance-nebraska)