Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for James Madison University

This is what was found by the JMU GES Pod at James Madison University 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\(^2\)?

“James Madison University is an equal opportunity employer committed to creating and supporting a diverse and inclusive work and educational community that is free of all forms of discrimination. This institution does not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of age, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, parental status, political affiliation, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. We promote access, inclusion, and diversity for all students, faculty, staff, constituents, and programs, believing that these qualities are foundational components of an outstanding education in keeping with our mission. The University is interested in candidates whose experience and qualifications support an ongoing commitment to this core quality.” - from the Recommended Strategies for Expanding and Retaining a Diverse Faculty training information accessible at https://www.jmu.edu/humanresources/recruitment/faculty-recruitment/faculty-recruitment-resources.shtml

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

Advertisements for geoscience positions in our program have typically been posted to GSA, AGU, and other sub-discipline-specific professional organizations. In recent years, we have also posted to SACNES, AWG, and NABG, although we did not have much personal experience/relationship building in any of these organizations, which we seek to change going forward. We also typically would send job information directly to PhD granting geoscience departments who had programs in specific sub-discipline we were seeking. In the future we plan to reach out more broadly; we appreciated the list of institutions that graduate higher percentages of BIPOC PhDs (Table 1.1 in URGE Session 5 reading by

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\(^1\) R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.onig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples, (2017).
\(^2\) https://careers.whoi.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/
\(^5\) https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html
Posselt, 2016) – this gives us a starting point, but not an ending point – we recognize that reaching out to smaller institutions that may not make it on to that list are also important to include in promoting job opportunities in our program.

- 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 applications to tenure track positions in our program typically include: a cover letter, teaching and scholarship statements, a full CV, and names and contact information of ~3 people who could supply letters of reference, if requested by the committee.

Undergraduate admissions requirements to JMU for freshman, transfer, and international students can be found here:
- Freshman: https://www.jmu.edu/admissions/apply/freshman-application-process.shtml
- Transfer: https://www.jmu.edu/admissions/apply/transfer.shtml
- International: https://www.jmu.edu/admissions/apply/international.shtml

Required items include a fee and transcripts. For international students proof of English proficiency is also required. Optional items include: information on extracurricular activities, letters of recommendations, personal statements, and standardized test scores (e.g., SAT/ACT scores).

To reduce the barrier of the English language proficiency requirement, JMU offers an option for students to participate in the International Year (IY) Program at the James Madison University International Study Center. The IY Program is a fast-track pathway to second-year placement into a James Madison University bachelor’s degree. It includes specialized courses in American culture, Intensive English Program (IEP) and study skills to help international students adjust to US teaching methods and resources. Students also take courses from year 1 of their chosen degree program.

- How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric⁴,⁵ public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?

Applicants to tenure track positions in our program are evaluated in a multi-stage process and using a rubric. The rubric is designed to evaluate only criteria that are part the job ad. The rubric categories aim to evaluate a candidate’s potential for contributing to program goals and responsibilities. Advancing DEI goals has specifically been included on the rubric in recent position rubrics, and the topic was specifically included in to be addressed in the teaching statement. While we do not remove
names, we believe the rubric is doing its job – just like a rubric in a class assignment helps promote consistent and fair evaluation, so do the rubrics we have used in the hiring process. To our knowledge the rubric is not made public. Rather, the emphasis from HR is on confidentiality. From our perspective in, JMU seems very risk adverse. A long-standing challenge at JMU is the lack of support for addressing the needs of duel career candidates. Some progress is being made in this area, but it is an ongoing concern.

Regarding evaluation of applications for undergraduate admission to JMU: It is our impression that this is a long-standing nebulous process that has not been transparent to our department, and from our communication with other departments, this seems to be the case at least throughout our college. However, we understand that a new Dean of Admissions will be in place soon – this brings us hope. That said, existing challenges include the following:

- JMU is historically and currently a primarily white (~75% over the past 5 years) and female (~60% over the past 5 years) institution. JMU student demographic interactive database: https://www.jmu.edu/oir/enrollment.shtml
- It is unclear to the pod members how important the optional items are in the student application materials. For example, while optional – if an application does not include such information is it evaluated in the same way as applications that do include that information?
- The main vehicle for recruiting students who have been admitted to JMU but who have not yet accepted is a program called Choices (https://www.jmu.edu/choices/), but there are inequities in how it is designed and implemented. Such concerns have been raised in the past but have not gained traction.
- A key problem is the financial model of the university. JMU does not have a strong endowment. Therefore growth of JMU is heavily tied to tuition dollars of future students. Students who can pay full tuition are therefore likely more attractive than those who cannot. Many student programs (global engagement) are designed to have students at JMU who can afford such high dollar programs.

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

Regarding tenure-track hiring: The search committee of ~3-5 faculty members typically has representation across the careers stages (e.g., assistant, associate, full professors) and gender diversity. The last two searches were chaired by female faculty.

Regarding undergraduate student admission to JMU: We do not have a good understanding of the admissions selection committee or how decisions are made. Please see comments to earlier prompts.
Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?

We are not aware of outside consultants evaluating of hiring or admissions processes at JMU.

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”?

Regarding faculty hiring: We are not aware of JMU considering such strategies, however our pod is interested in modeling after initiatives such as done at Virginia Tech (https://www.inclusive.vt.edu/Programs/FFDP.html) to bring in cohorts of grad students and post docs who want to learn about a career in a type of institution and geoscience program like ours. We are also working to make our seminar series one that highlights the diversity of people and disciplines in the geosciences.

Regarding student admissions: We would like to see a model adopted at JMU like that used at UT Austin – blanket admission of the top ~6% of students of every high school in the state. We think this would help promote cultural change and advance DEI objectives at JMU. At the department level, we are looking into ways to focus on recruitment to the geosciences from the admitted students and retention of students in the program. We recognize the value that student research and small group experiences (including field trips, if done with accessible and inclusive practices) can have in building and sustaining a sense of belonging and a welcoming community, and want to find ways to adopt these and other practices earlier in the program to attract and retain a large and more diverse group of first and second year students.