Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University/Organization

This is what was found by University of Lynchburg/Virginia Museum of Natural History pod at the Virginia Museum of Natural History on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available?**
  - **VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**
    - For Virginia Museum of Natural History job solicitations, the following EEO statement is provided: “We are an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants are afforded equal opportunities without regard to race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, veteran status, political affiliation, genetics or disability. The successful applicant must furnish proof of identity and employment eligibility and is subject to a background check.”
    - Contact information for the Human Resources Office is provided as well. The solicitation itself does not provide other inclusion statements or resources exclusive to the Virginia Museum of Natural History.
    - In light of the “boilerplate” quality of the offered EEO statement, we recommend a more VMNH-specific inclusion statement be placed on our website and linked to in job solicitations. That could emphasize the museum’s inclusivity outside of the state-mandated statement offered above.
  - **UNIVERSITY OF LYNCHBURG**
    - The University’s new inclusion statement is as follows: “The University of Lynchburg is dedicated to inclusive excellence. In alignment with the Disciples of Christ Identity Statement and Principles, we celebrate the diversity of our common life, affirming our different histories, realities, and identities. All belong here. As a testament to our strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we will attract and retain a diverse faculty, staff, and student body, foster belonging, and create a community that embraces civil discourse and accountability for our words and actions. The University of Lynchburg embraces diversity in its broadest sense and will cultivate an inclusive, equitable, and safe campus climate, grounded in respect, where all members of our diverse learning community can thrive.”

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5. https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html
Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?

- **VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**
  - Virginia Museum of Natural History job solicitations are provided on the Virginia state jobs site ([jobs.virginia.gov](http://jobs.virginia.gov)), VMNH homepage ([www.vmnh.net](http://www.vmnh.net)), VMNH social media venues, and numerous job listing sites, including:
    - indeed.com
    - lensa.com
    - paleowire.com
    - spnhc.org
  - Job solicitations for the VMNH are usually only provided online and do not regularly reach beyond the main online venues for the museum itself and standard job posting sites. The museum does participate in career-oriented events, targeted at K-12 students. However, these are focused on explaining the range of career options in museums and the natural sciences, rather than targeted recruitment efforts for specific VMNH positions.
  - We would recommend academic job solicitations be directed at higher education/university hiring boards, especially those targeted at underrepresented groups. By doing so, we could reach a wider range of potential career scientists who would otherwise pursue traditional college/university hiring or industry careers.

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?

- **VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**
  - Applicant requirements vary widely based on the position being offered. The requirements for an assistant curator role (similar in rank and qualifications to assistant professor at a 4-year university) are as follows:
    - Documentation of higher degree (e.g., masters, Ph.D.).
    - Contact information for three or more recommendation letter-writers.
    - “A statement of research and curatorial interests”
    - Cover letter.
    - “A list of publications relevant to the application.”
  - Cost-prohibitive testing and/or application fees are not involved in the specific application materials for VMNH academic positions. However, possible barriers to applicants include:
Access to high-profile letter-writers who could provide strong recommendation for an applicant’s role in their respective field.

Access to funds for publication costs associated with publications.

- 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?

  o **VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**
    - Applications are evaluated using a rubric-based criterion. Categories for the rubric are selected based on the requirements and preferred qualifications for the position. Applicants are assigned a value for each rubric category.
    - The rubric categories are NOT made public, except in the requirements and preferred qualifications offered in the job solicitations.
    - The relative value of each rubric category to the decision of a final list for interviews is not established, likely varying depending on the individual making the evaluations. As such, research and collections staff tend to prefer categories related to research. Educational staff tend to prefer categories related to education and outreach.
    - Applicant names remain on applications, as do the institutional affiliations of the applicants.
    - To increase transparency about hiring decisions, we recommend that the essential rubric criteria for hiring decisions be made explicit on the job solicitations. As such, all potential applicants would have the same framework with which to approach the application materials and highlight their respective strengths.
    - We also recommend that applicant names be removed from submissions, so as to decrease pre-existing biases on the hiring committees.

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

  o **VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**
    - The selection committees for research & collections positions always have the following staff members:
      - The supervisor of the position (usually the museum director).
      - The administrator of science (a non-scientist who facilitates science communication through writing and outreach).
      - The director of human resources.
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• The selection committees are also made up of other VMNH staff who are likely to interact with the position in the future:
  • Other curators.
  • A member of the technical staff.
  • The director of education.
• Finally, for curatorial positions, an external member who is an expert in a field relevant to the position is usually present to provide field-specific expertise. This is usually a member of another Virginia academic institution.
• Applicant questions are usually fielded by the Director of Human Resources and the Science Administrator of the VMNH. Questions relevant to specific curators are relayed through the Science Administrator.
• Final decisions are made by the prospective employee’s supervisor in the VMNH org chart. For curators, this is the Museum Director.

  • UNIVERSITY OF LYNCHBURG
    • At the University of Lynchburg, faculty selection committees typically consist of faculty members within the hiring department, along with an additional faculty member from across campus. A representative from our Office of Equity and Inclusion is also included.
    • Final decisions are made by the University Provost.

• Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?
  • The hiring process at both the VMNH and the University of Lynchburg has not been evaluated by outside consultants in the past decade.
  • Changes may be made through staff recommendations to the HR director or the museum director. A formal process does not exist for either institution.

• 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”?

  • VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
    • The museum has not implemented any of the aforementioned strategies, although this is likely due to the limited number of hires that occur in any given span of time.
Based on discussions with the Director of Human Resources, the VMNH is currently developing a “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” plan. Details are unavailable at this time.

- UNIVERSITY OF LYNCHBURG
  - The University of Lynchburg recently added representatives from the Office of Equity and Inclusion to our search process.