

DELIVERABLE 5

Hiring and Admissions Policies for the Jackson School of Geosciences (JSG) Pod at The University of Texas at Austin

The JSG URGE Pod has 87 Members. Therefore, the Pod is split into “Podlets” to accommodate meeting times and foster discussions in smaller groups. Below is the synthesized deliverable for the JSG pod with specific guidelines for each Podlet.

Note: there may not be consensus between podlets.

This is what was found by the JSG URGE Pod at the University of Texas at Austin on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

Hiring (Faculty/Staff Researchers)

Note: There are different standards/examples at different units/for different positions.

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?**
 - From the recent [structure search](#): The Department of Geological Sciences is part of the Jackson School of Geosciences (JSG), which also includes two research units, the Institute for Geophysics and the Bureau of Economic Geology. The Jackson School of Geosciences has a community of over 190 research scientists and faculty with a broad range of specialties and access to outstanding research facilities and support. The University is located in a thriving Austin metropolitan area with a dynamic, multicultural community of over 2 million people. We seek an individual who facilitates collaborations among faculty, researchers, and students in the department, school and university and complements existing strengths within the Jackson School.
 - **Suggestions:** Highlight efforts to diversify e.g., “a history of efforts/success to improve DEI”, or “track record of DEI initiatives”
 - **Suggestion:** Pay closer attention to the language used in the job advertisements
 - Equal Employment Opportunity Statement from UT (included in all jobs): *The University of Texas at Austin, as an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination and affirmative action. The University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions.*
 - UTIG Job Listings (bottom of page): *The University of Texas at Austin is an equal employment opportunity/affirmative action employer. All positions are security sensitive, and conviction verification is conducted on applicants selected.*

- **Where are advertisements posted or sent?**

- For the most recent DGS search (structural geology):

- UT website
- AAPG (American Association of Petroleum Geologists)
- AGU Jobs (American Geophysical Union)
- AWG (Association of Women Geoscientists)
- EWSN (Earth Science Women's Network)
- Earthworks
- GSA (Geological Society of America)
- Nature
- NABG/NABGG (National Association of Black Geologists and Geophysicists)
- SACNAS (Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science)
- Seismological Society of America
- Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology
- Southern California Earthquake Center (SCEC)
- GeoPrisms
- Tectonophysics / AGU
- Structural Geology and Tectonics / GSA

- Note that this will likely change from search to search

- **Suggestion:** the highlighted places should be used for every search.

- Suggestion: Include these:

- Twitter and other social media <- often more helpful than you think!
- Earth Science Job search
- diversescholar.org
- Targeted listservs (e.g., PaleoJobs)

- **Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**

- Reaching out to individuals to encourage them to apply.

- Reach out to folks from listservs such as [DiversifyMicrobiology](#)

- We typically have job adds at conference booths at:

- GSA
- AGU
- SACNAS
- Others, e.g., National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP), NABGG, American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)

- **What are the requirements for an applicant?**

- Typically:

- Cover letter
- CV
- Research Statement
- Teaching Statement
- Diversity Statement
- 3 Letters of Reference

- Often faculty searches include a “teaching philosophy”. This particular request has not been all that useful for search committees. Nobody seems to know what they are looking for. It must also be similarly confusing for applicants.
 - **Suggestion:** There should be a document or webpage that highlights what the committee is looking to learn from a teaching/research/diversity statement.
- **Recent changes:** Rubric was added, diversity statement was added, skype/zoom interview before main interview added.
- **Suggestion:** As part of the “call” have guidelines/recommendations from the committee (i.e., what are you looking for? What do they want to see?). UT Has them.... we should include links to them in the Job call!
 - <https://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/drafting-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-dei-statement>
 - <https://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/teaching-statement>
 - Other Examples:
 - <https://academicaffairs.ucdavis.edu/why-does-uc-davis-look-for-diversity-statements-applicants>
 - <https://ofew.berkeley.edu/recruitment/contributions-diversity/rubric-assessing-candidate-contributions-diversity-equity-and>
 - <https://crlt.umich.edu/resources-publications/teaching-philosophies-statements>
- **Is providing any of these requirements a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?**
 - Not that we could think of... we have a list of “Dos and Don’ts” in terms of questions we can and cannot ask.
- **How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric^{4,5} public? No (Faculty can see it but it’s not public). What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?**
 - Usually, committees discuss their own rubrics, which vary from person to person. Establishing a search-specific rubric, even if search committee members have slightly different priorities, makes the process much more transparent.
 - **Suggestion:** Rubrics (not always made) are often made after the job letter goes out. We suggest the rubric is developed before the job ad goes out and should be approved by the whole faculty with the job ad!
 - We all have biases. Good to be open about them to the committee and to oneself.
 - It may be interesting to hide college, since the pedigree bias is so prevalent in academia. Difficult to know how to do this logistically.
 - **Suggestions:** There should be a reflection on the hiring process by the search committee after the hire is done. Reflect on what worked/what didn’t, what power dynamic issues were there? What should have been started sooner? etc. Reflection can provide a document for future search committees to learn from and start from. This should then be discussed with the whole faculty!
 - **Suggestion:** Implicit bias training entire search committee, not just the committee head!

- **Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?**
 - Chair/Dean selects search committees (mixed ranks/genders, usually one BEG, one UTIG, one DGS (at least) + one grad student). They make final decisions based on recommendations from the committee. Chair/Dean are often not so involved with the evaluation process. So any careful committee deliberations and nuance about diversity may be lost in the process.
 - Could postdocs be added?
 - Faculty have up or down votes on committee recommendations, but don't have a direct impact on the committee's recommendation or decision process. They can give feedback of course, but may or may not weigh heavily enough.
 - lack of clarity on whether you just need a simple majority vote (e.g., recent hire)

- **Has your hiring process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**
 - We do not think it has been evaluated, each hire seems to occur on an ad hoc basis
 - Provost did a small, internal review prior to Dean Search, which was itself run by an external firm.
 - At UT Central level, DDCE materials are evaluated externally.
 - e.g., <https://equity.utexas.edu/faculty-recruitment-and-retention/recruitment-toolkit/>
 - **Suggestion:** We should have our hiring practices evaluated:
 - The evaluation could be worked into part of the "JSG All School Review", which last occurred in 2016.
 - I think this is super important... our hiring procedure has evolved a lot over the last 5-7 years and I think it would be really informative to have it reviewed!
 - Should the business office do a "first pass" on applications (i.e., Monica Reed)?
 - It would be really good to have a JSG or DGS "How to hire a colleague" outline document.. it often feels like we are reinventing the wheel each time. There should be standards/procedures that are followed and consistent!

- **Has your university 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"⁶?**
 - Yes to partner hires and monitoring, no to the others (but we really should)
 - There is a University-wide orientation
 - VERY logistic/administrative.
 - The university does run a new faculty orientation out of the Provost's office (actually put on by the Provosts Teaching Fellows program), but it is not catered to particular disciplines, what new faculty or researchers within the Jackson School of Geosciences would need to thrive.
 - UTIG has a mentoring program for Research Associates and Research Scientists (as well as post-docs).
 - **Suggestions:** Consider adding a "JSG-specific New Faculty Orientation" and a more structured mentoring program for new faculty hires.
 - We are in the process of revamping our mentoring program.

Admissions (Graduate and Undergraduate)

The JSG Graduate Admissions page is here:

www.jsg.utexas.edu/education/graduate/admissions/

The UT Austin Undergraduate Admissions page is here: <https://admissions.utexas.edu/>

Admission Statistics: <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/admissions/where-to-begin/admissions-and-enrollment-statistics>

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?**
 - None?
 - **Suggestion:** Have a stronger statement about the importance of creating a diverse community of scholars that includes a description of current initiatives that are working towards supporting and valuing a diverse community.

- **Where are advertisements posted or sent?**
 - Booths at national conferences
 - Contact networking with undergraduate institutions
 - Jackson School website
 - The [EDGE](#) (Enhancing Diversity in Geoscience Education) Program is AMAZING
 - **Suggestion:** “Strong academic record” might turn people away. Remove it here
 - **Suggestion:** Ask students how they found the department (e.g., GeoForce, website, met someone at SACNAS etc.)

- **Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for admissions, e.g. conferences, showcases?**
 - **Suggestion:** Expand our efforts to promote our grad program to undergrads in other STEM fields (engineering, physics, chem, math, comp sci, etc), especially if MSIs don't have geo programs.
 - More broadly: promote all aspects of geoscience (i.e. overcome the image of needing to be outdoorsy)
 - **Side Note: Remove the “expectation of doing field work” from the qualifying exam and student handbook.**
 - Qual forms ask for fieldwork requirement and language requirement -- need to overhaul this/highlight more about whether the candidate is prepared for their proposed work.
 - **Suggestion:** Pay closer attention to the language used in prospective student advertisements
 - **Suggestion:** There is a need for more transparency in what a student needs to do to apply (i.e. reach out to potential mentors) and how the level of support may or may not meet their needs (i.e. students often have roommates to share high costs of living in Austin, etc).
 - We need to do a better job of recruitment from historically minority institutions (HBCUs) and other colleges (ACC).

- **Suggestion:** Include a timeline for students with instructions (e.g., in August-November, reach out to a mentor, here's a link for how to find a mentor, here's a link to writing a letter).
- **What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores³/grades?**
 - Requirements:
 - Transcripts (\$\$) for GPA,
 - 3 Letters of Recommendations (2 from "academic" mentors, i.e., professors),
 - Statement of Purpose
 - GRE (currently waived... requested permission from the graduate school to remove permanently)
 - Fees
 - TOEFL (if English is not a first language)
- **Is providing any of the above a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed?**
 - GRE, TOEFL, Fees, transcript request fees (set by home institutions)
 - Letters of recommendation semi-quantitative rating of students by letter writers: **extremely biased** (totally depends on recommender's sample size) but appears ok b/c it's "data." Can be hard to get 3 (strong) letters from a small institution / limited experience e.g. needing to get letters or high ratings from people who don't know you that well and aren't comfortable rating you highly.
 - Timeline (not everyone is looking in the fall)
- **Are there any problematic questions asked?**
 - In the admissions 'useful to see in graduate students' page, 'passion for geoscience' stands out as problematic. How do you assess passion? Does this discourage students from outside of geoscience undergraduate programs ?
 - instead we could use language like ' how do you respond to adversity?' (which is already there and is great!!), "how do you approach long/protracted projects?"
 - ^ Note: We have recently added more description to what we are looking for on the JSG admissions page (which is an improvement, but obviously more could be included)
 - Still seems to require research experience - we do have some programs at UT that do provide UG research experiences
 - Still tailored to someone from a specific background - reflecting the cohort already at the Jackson school - which isn't necessarily in line with expanding diversity at the Jackson School
 - limited space for applicants to describe themselves holistically
 - quantitative rankings in letters of recommendation
- **What changes have been made recently?**
 - Waiving the GRE requirement

- Wording on the [JSG website](#) has improved in explaining what qualifications are useful to see in graduate students. The GSC spent a lot of time discussing this wording and it is much improved from what had been there before. Should help students craft better statements of purpose.
- **How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric^{4,5} public?**

***NOTE: Some GSC information cannot be disclosed. What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?**

 - Contacting a potential advisor is based on the experience or mentorship of the student applying.
 - **Suggestion:** This should be made more clear on the JSG Admissions information website.
 - **Suggestion:** Make resources available on the application page
 - e.g., Link to this blog on the Admissions information website: https://genatjsg.org/entering_grad_school
 - Did you know GSEC has a prospective student page? <https://www.jsg.utexas.edu/gsec/prospective-students/>
 - Lab groups could have a “How to join us” webpage (since many students find PIs through google) with a guide of what to include in inquiries.
 - e.g., [the GEN resources](#)
 - e.g., [Kristina’s Blog](#)
 - [UC Santa Cruz “How to email a professor”](#)
 - [Graduate School Application Station](#)
 - Could be useful for individual PI’s to post status on their web pages if they are likely to admit students for a given year (and keep it updated)- eliminates some of the ambiguity for students up front/can determine if it’s worth contacting from the beginning.
 - **Suggestion:** Ideally, on the JSG program website there would be a “timeline of application materials” that could spell out *when* and *how* (with an example!) to contact faculty in the program and initiate contact. (Can refer to EDGE in the timeline, too)
 - e.g., Add the “Find an Expert page” to help guide potential students].
 - Who to contact for an overview of who to contact.
 - Write a list of who is currently accepting students (will save everyone time!) on the program website. One simple way to do this would be to have a simple, 1 question survey that faculty could take in a GSC meeting or something that would propagate a list of who is/isn’t looking for students that year.
- **Who is on graduate (or undergraduate) selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?**
 - The selection committee is typically appointed by the unit heads.
 - **Suggestion:** give the JSG community a greater voice in the selection process for members of the search committees. The committee needs to be more diverse (better than it was but still).
 - **Suggestion:** Implicit bias training for members of the admission reviewers; not just the head of the committee!

- **Has your admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**
 - Since no one answered, probably not

- **Has your university implemented or considered strategies like mentoring, dual career support and partner hires, re-visioning your work culture, or other considerations outlined in “Leveraging Promising Practices”⁶?**
 - There is a new graduate student orientation week.
 - ***The new grad field trip should be more inclusive (less field/rock orientated), the trip is long, hot, and not very welcoming to non-traditional geoscience students.***
 - **Suggestions:**
 - Consider how faculty annual evaluations can include an assessment of a faculty member’s contributions to diversity of graduate program admissions
 - Make the transition process from undergrad to grad more clear- e.g., outline the costs/processes
 - possible to set up a transition fund? For both international and US students
 - Create a more welcoming environment for international students
 - Help international students navigate culture shock by providing resources and a (in)formal orientation on where to live, how to commute, health care, fees, ESL information, paperwork, taxes, stipends/salaries (Eirini Poulaki made a similar document)
 - From Eirini: This is the google doc (living document):
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DbHbM7fIFJ8kuU84Xxf9_stUAhUzxOs7/view?usp=sharing (and older version is available on the GSEC website:
<https://www.jsg.utexas.edu/gsec/prospective-students/>