URGE Session 5 Deliverable:

Examining the policies for admissions and hiring and identifying new policies to propose or current policies to change

MIT Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences

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(1) Job Postings & Advertisements

• Where are job advertisements posted on the EAPS website?

The MIT EAPS website has a webpage focused on employment opportunities (https://eapsweb.mit.edu/about/employment) with presently active postdoc, faculty, research staff, and administrative positions (faculty position was also posted as a news item on the main EAPS webpage- Short, Full). In addition, the Education webpage on the website has a link to the Postdoc Program with the following text regarding hiring (https://eapsweb.mit.edu/education/postdoctoral) :

"Postdocs are appointed after recommendation by a faculty sponsor, and the department hosts 35-65 postdocs with active appointments in any given year. Candidates interested in postdoctoral study at EAPS are encouraged to contact the appropriate faculty member directly."
along with another link for the distinguished fellowship applications
(https://eapsweb.mit.edu/education/postdoctoral-program/DPF).

The EAPS website has a graduate admissions webpage (https://eapsweb.mit.edu/graduate-admissions) with information about the program and requirements (see subsequent sections of this document). At present there is no available list on the website regarding which faculty are potentially interested in admitting students (with the following categories) - e.g., have available grants, have grant proposals pending review, don't

have grant money but can potentially support students through fellowships - as well as faculty who will not be admitting a student in the coming year.

Suggestion for improvements: Although the EAPS website has various web pages for job postings (as mentioned above), it requires a bit of searching to get to the appropriate links and the information is not available at a single location (for e.g., the employment link is only accessible via the **About** page on the website). In the future, making all the information accessible from the employment page directly would be useful. Additionally, the job ads at present do not have any information about the timeline for the hiring and interview decisions (only has the application deadline). This information can be very helpful for candidates partially for having a sense of when to expect an answer and also for planning their futures & deciding among different job options.

• *Where does EAPS advertise their job postings outside the website? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?*
The EAPS faculty and at least some of the postdoc positions (the distinguished fellowships) are posted on some job websites (https://findajob.agu.org/) but we could not all find all the available postdoc posting (e.g., the current Postdoctoral Scholar - Earth Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences within the Climate Modelling Alliance (CliMA)). The MIT Office of Graduate Education has some programs for recruitment focused on increasing diversity (https://oge.mit.edu/graddiversity/ - e.g., Recruitment @ National Diversity-related Conferences, National Name Exchange) but we did not find anything EAPS specific.

We also did not find many EAPS job postings on other websites (though some of them showed up on a Google search hosted job list) and job boards such as HigherEdJobs, Chronicle of Higher Ed Jobs, LinkedIn, and other Diversity higher education-specific job postings (Useful compilation of various postings: Link 1 (Harvard), Link (Case Western)) Some examples of available postings on common job boards: Link (not many EAPS postings, but some other MIT departments have posted jobs here, Link 2 - MIT Sloan has a number of jobs posted here including the DEI officer) - Note that a number of websites do not show closed/past job searches; so it is hard to collect the data of what was posted.

Suggestion for improvements: As noted above, the MIT EAPS job postings are not always widely posted outside the department website. We have identified a number of specific locations (e.g., programs through MIT and specific job boards) to advertise the MIT EAPS opportunities for a broad group of students and researchers.

• *What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement?* Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available?

MIT is an Equal Employment Opportunity employer. MIT's full policy on Nondiscrimination is found here (9.2). Each MIT EAPS job posting has the following information posted alongside :

Non-discrimination Notification
MIT is an equal employment opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment and will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin. Read [MIT's full policy on non-discrimination](#).

full [MIT policy](#):

"The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is committed to the principle of equal opportunity in education and employment. The Institute prohibits discrimination against individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, employment policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other Institute administered programs and activities; the Institute may, however, favor US citizens or residents in admissions and financial aid.*"

Some job postings also explicitly include the following in the job ad :
"We strongly encourage women and under-represented minorities to apply." and
"EAPS is committed to academic excellence and to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment."

For the current planetary faculty search (but not the research and postdoc positions), the job ad included the following :
"Recognizing that educational experiences of all students are enhanced when the diversity of their backgrounds is acknowledged and valued, we ask candidates to articulate (**in the teaching and mentoring statement, and, as appropriate, in the cover letter or research statement**) their views on inclusivity and equity as they pertain to teaching, mentorship, research, and service."

Suggestion for improvements: It would be useful to standardize the contents of job advertisements - particularly the statements listed above. Presently, the EEO statement is the main standard part of the Job Add. Also, it may be useful to include something asking the candidates to articulate their views on inclusion and equity for all job ads, rather than the faculty searches only. Note that the undergraduate admissions include the following question (for 2021-2022, https://mitadmissions.org/apply/firstyear/essays-activities-academics/) and Admissions policy includes a Diversity Statement (https://mitadmissions.org/policies/) :
"At MIT, we bring people together to better the lives of others. MIT students work to improve their communities in different ways, from tackling the world's biggest challenges to being a good friend. Describe one way in which you have contributed to your community, whether in your family, the classroom, your neighborhood, etc. (200–250 words)"

2) <u>Application & Evaluation Processes</u>

• 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?

Application Process :
- Discussed in next section ([Fees & Test Scores)](#)
- Comprehensive information and FAQ clearly accessed online (ex. [here](#))
  - "Character references do not carry weight"
  - Subjects Taken form required to include all science and mathematics courses taken
- General <u>Graduate Admissions web page</u> is presently *very* vague and should be updated to be more specific :
  - "Prospective students are encouraged to seek out faculty at national meetings and conferences." *specifically address how one might do that, and alternatives for potential students not attending such events*
  - "We cannot waive the [TOEFL and IELTS] application fee for international students" *investigate if this is a reasonable measure for the program to enforce*
  - Suggested Preparation courses offers a list of specifics, but should include explanations as to why courses are useful for these specialties
- Application assistance program (TIDE AMP) is a *student run program* to help applicants navigate the application process
  - Mentorship program to provide assistance to potential applicants. *Add FAQ from the previous cycle to ensure clarity as this program grows*

Faculty support & Evaluation :
- Information from [faculty handbook](#)
  - Faculty must step up financial support and agree to sign on as an advisor for a doctoral student
  - First & second year fellowships are used in EAPS to allow faculty to accept students into the program even if they do not have immediate funding. However, at present, incoming students do not always get confirmation about getting the fellowships much after they
  - Otherwise, no details on the admissions process publicly shared online
- [MIT DEI Strategic Plan](#) includes the following commitment: "each academic program will document its graduate admission process and selection criteria… to ensure there are holistic processes for admissions decisions. This goal is *in progress* according to DEI Plan.
- MIT EAPS Strategic Plan includes an outline to broaden diversity in undergraduate admissions

Suggestion for improvements/ongoing work :
- *TIDE AMP Program: a student led program to help potential applicants navigate the system of applying to EAPS*
  - Ongoing work to add an FAQ section on the website to make it easier for prospective undergraduate students to navigate the process.

- Create a timeline for AMP coordinators (everything from initial emails to follow-up meetings with the admissions committee) to make it easier for them to participate in the program and make a clear guide.
- Advertising various MIT admission fee waivers clearly - this will ensure that prospective students are aware of the exact policy (should also be done on the main MIT EAPS website).
- **Providing a general timeline for applicants** (i.e. things you can do in undergrad that are helpful for admission): These would include class requirements for different research programs in the department - more specific suggestions besides the ones one the EAPS Graduate Admissions website, timeline to contact potential advisors and how to approach them (e.g., emailing advisors for opportunities, meeting at conferences, asking undergraduate advisors to help initiate initial contact). *Some of this information can also be potentially added to the EAPS Graduate Admissions website.*
- Prioritizing good matches between mentees and mentors : Providing informal advice about advisor expectations, research approach and mentoring style.
- Beyond TIDE AMP:
  - Potentially developing a clear rubric for evaluating applicants and either making it publicly available or at least making the broad categories of the rubric available for students. This would also ensure that the application evaluation process is fair and is not implictly biased (e.g., requirements for certain classes or specific level of undergraduate research work) against undergraduates from under-represented groups.

Postdoc process: https://eapsweb.mit.edu/education/postdoctoral
https://eapsweb.mit.edu/education/postdoctoral-program/DPF

(3) Fees & Test Scores

Graduate Admissions
The graduate application consists of 5 sections (and one additional section for international students). Note, the standardized testing requirements have been waived for the 2021 application cycle, and will be revisited in the future.

1. *Biographical section*
2. *3 letters of recommendation*
3. *GRE general test scores*
4. *"Subjects Taken" form with grades*
5. *Statement of Objectives.*
6. *The IELTS or TOEFL test (for all international applicants whose education was in a language other than English)*

Standardized Test Requirements
- General GRE Test, Required (no minimum required score)

- Chemistry or Physics subject test required for Planetary Science program
- Minimum scores for IELTS and TOEFL
  - IELTS: Minimum score: 7.0
  - TOEFL: Minimum Score:
    - 600 (paper-based)
    - 100 (internet-based)

Comments: The GRE general exam costs around $200 to take, per source. The GRE subject test exam costs $150 to take. Sending your GRE scores to a school costs $27, per report. The cost of IELTS is around $250, and the cost of TOEFL is around $180.

To apply to MIT EAPS, the total cost can be a minimum of $302, to a maximum of $627, not including test preparation books, transportation fees, etc. For many students, MIT EAPS is not the only school that they apply to for graduate school.

Is the application fee ever waived or deferred?
The application fee is $75, which is standardized across most of MIT departments. The EAPS application website states the following:

> "The application fee helps to defray the cost of processing applications. It is never waived and must be paid in U.S. dollars. We accept credit cards with the electronic online application and personal checks, bank checks, or money orders if a credit card is not available."

Comments: This information is inconsistent with the information on MIT's graduate admissions website: https://gradadmissions.mit.edu/about/diversity-initiatives/fee-waiver, which offers application fee waivers for those that demonstrate financial hardship.

Statement of Purpose
> Note: we could not actually access the application, so it is unclear whether or not there are instructions/guidelines regarding the statement of purpose.

Suggestions for changes: The statement of objectives is a standard graduate school requirement, yet there are rarely any resources on department websites regarding what makes a successful statement of purpose. This document may be helpful for students, for instance. Explanation of a successful statement of purpose should also include "unwritten norms such as reaching out to an advisor via email ahead of time".

Financing Graduate School Statement:
Below is the statement on financing graduate school found in a sidebar on the main page of the graduate application:

> "Any student admitted to an EAPS doctoral program can expect to receive financial support that includes a stipend, full tuition, and health insurance. First year support may be in the form of a fellowship or research assistantship. Support in the following years is most commonly from a research assistantship. Continuation of support for the length of a five-year program is based on the student making adequate progress toward the degree.

Applicants are encouraged to apply for independent fellowships. If an independent fellowship falls below the EAPS level of support, the department will supplement the outside fellowship. Please contact the EAPS Education Office to discuss the Department policy on merging various sources of support."

Suggestions for changes: It would be useful to have a bit more information on the admissions webpage regarding funding since this is a critical issue for all incoming students, but especially for students from under-represented groups. Additional details regarding common scenarios such as: What happens if the student decides to switch advisors? Is there a maximum number of semesters for a Teaching Assistant position that a student can do for support? What are the various fellowships, especially within the EAPS department or MIT in general, and how competitive are they?

Statement on the Role of Diversity:
Below is the diversity statement found in a sidebar on the page of the graduate application:
> *"A diverse student body is and has long been critical to the educational mission of MIT. We are committed to providing our students "with an education that combines rigorous academic study and the excitement of discovery with the support and intellectual stimulation of a diverse campus community."*

Suggested discussion questions (Zoe)

General:
- What was your experience like going through hiring and/or admissions, start to finish?
- Who is on your hiring and/or admissions committees? Who interfaces with applicants?
- Does your organization make their hiring/admissions policies public? Are they reviewed? http://web.mit.edu/provost/raceinitiative/exec-g.html

Job Postings and Advertisements:
- How can the department create an objective system in evaluating candidates?
- What would you like to see in a rubric or what additional materials should be included (ex: DEI statement, etc…)?
- How can EAPS reach the broadest pool of applicants when posting advertisements?

Application and Evaluation Processes:
- The TIDE AMP is a student-run initiative. What steps can the department take in supporting or supplementing this program?
- Because much of the admissions process is dependent on an advisor offering financial support, how can EAPS best address the composition of the incoming class? How does this admission process relate to the idea of "risk aversion" discussed by Posselt?
- How can the admissions process be made more objective without becoming reliant on numbers (test scores, etc…)?

Fees and Test Scores:
- Do the current funding policies for students serve as a barrier for admitted students? Is there transparency regarding funding policies for students?
- What should the role of standardized testing be in graduate admissions?

- What resources are needed for potential students to be able to write a successful statement of purpose? How can EAPS provide these resources and better advertise such information?

Suggested Improvements

More clarity/formalizing the hiring process

      Demographics of applicants was done in Session 3

      Encouragement of students to reach out to potential advisors

      What is the role of individual faculty versus committees

More clarity/formalizing of the graduate admission process; how are fellowships allocated

      What is the role of individual faculty versus committees

Many students are denied access because they want to work with faculty who do not have funding

      Is there a guarantee that students have funding for their entire PhD? Or at least don't have to look for funding on their own?

      Faculty handbook describes: *"All students admitted to the EAPS doctoral or MIT/WHOI programs are admitted with full support that includes a stipend, health insurance, and full tuition. This support covers the full academic year and continues as long as the student is making satisfactory progress toward the degree"*

      Transparency regarding funding policies for students? Having to TA? What if they want to switch projects?

Any creative hiring practices? Clusters? Hiring cohorts?

      Often coordinated at the school level rather than department (need approval for headcount)