



UBURGE DELIVERABLE 5: RACISM AND ACCESSIBILITY AT UB GEOLOGY

This is what was found by the UB URGE Pod on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve. This deliverable is formatted as important, relevant questions about accessibility and racism in the UB Geology Department, followed by the answers we found to these questions.

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

These are the statements found on UB's webpages: "The University at Buffalo is committed to ensuring equal employment, educational opportunity, and equal access to services, programs, and activities without regard to an individual's race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, gender, pregnancy, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, predisposing genetic characteristics, marital status, familial status, veteran status, military status, domestic violence victim status, or criminal conviction status." AND "As an Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Employer, The Research Foundation for SUNY will not discriminate in its employment practices due to an applicant's race, color, creed, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, transgender status, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, citizenship, physical and mental disability, criminal record, genetic information, predisposition or carrier status, status with respect to receiving public assistance, domestic violence victim status, a disabled, special, recently separated, active duty wartime, campaign badge, Armed Forces service medal veteran, or any other characteristics protected under applicable law. The Company will not discharge or in any other manner discriminate against employees or applicants because they have inquired about, discussed, or disclosed their own pay or the pay of another employee or applicant."

Furthermore, there is a DEI tab and inclusion statement publically available on UB Geology website.

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

For hiring: job ads are posted to major industry job boards (AGU/Eos, GeoPRISMS etc.), international listservs, sent out to colleagues for department listservs, conference networking

For admissions: twitter outreach by individual PIs looking for students, conference networking, and word of mouth are primary strategies.

3. What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores³/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?

Requirements for UB Geology Graduate Admission, which we found ourselves, online:

- Online application through UB. Its here you identify potential faculty mentors
- Personal Statement
- \$75 application fee (non-refundable)
- Transcripts - official or unofficial allowed, official transcripts required after acceptance.
- 3 letters of recommendation “from former or present professors”
- NO test scores or GPA thresholds implemented however

What Chris Lowry, current DGS, told us:

- This is a small department (limited applicants)
- Each student asked to ID potential faculty or group of faculty
- Faculty informed of applicants who ID them as potential advisors
- Graduate committee of three faculty (Dr. Lowry, Dr. Poinar, Dr. Valentine)
- Discuss whether student will be accepted + what kind of funding
- No faculty ID: DGS may suggest relevant faculty based on research interest (same for research group)
- Can be accepted as non-MS student without specific faculty
- Students usually personally accepted by PI rather than committee
- Geology permanently removed GRE requirement (not good metric for student success)
- No GRE for Presidential or Schomberg fellows - Geology/Chemistry have pushed hard for no test requirements
- Open to outside evaluation, will push with Bea. \$10k for evaluation, but NYS is ‘flush with cash’. No formal document for how to change, GRE example: staff pushed for removal, leading to a faculty meeting discussion, after which Chris reached out to colleagues and wrote a proposal to change it and sent it to the Dean of Graduate School. Usually receptive to changes but a proposal is needed.
- Post-doc hiring process: post-doc is hired by faculty member - faculty member creates committee, puts out add for post-doc, faculty member chooses person, committee agrees with faculty choice

- Faculty hiring: faculty hiring committee, they are in charge of finding/selecting new faculty, report to the rest of faculty, and submit to the Dean of Grad School to hire.
- Barriers
- Students of color - citizens and noncitizens. if a student is a noncitizen, they are on a 'bean-counting' level compared to citizens.
- Application fee: HUGE barrier for developing/foreign country citizens. international students: "\$75" US dollars is equivalent to a month's profit". Bea/the department chair currently pays the \$75 for students who can't cover it.
- Incoming international students need to prove to the US government they have an income that is actually more than what we pay for TA-lines. It has to do with visas- the government requires you to show you have a set amount of money to "survive in this country".
- Changes to domestic vs international student fees - to remove these barriers, it'll be a difficult fight. David Lang's office is in charge of application fees. UB student application fees can be waived for qualified students.
- ACTION ITEM: Post who could have the application fee waived on the department website - and possibly have Sharon pro-actively email students during the application process to get the fee waived. (There are requirements, so only email students who meet the criteria).
- In a fight with Deans office to let us pay people money, but not cut TA lines. Dean will let them pay money on things that are not 'core' processes, yet won't let them pay TA's more without cutting TA lines.
- In-state vs out-of-state tuition: out of state and international tuition are the same.
- ACTION ITEM: Make it clear on the website that you don't need to pay to go to grad school, funding exists for TAs/RAs.
- ACTION ITEM: Write proposal to add "geogradapp" to the top of the application so incoming students not familiar with the process are not going in blind.

What we identified as key barriers within this current framework:

- Application fee (can apply for reduced/waived fee, but not clear how/what documentation is needed).
- Letters of recommendation may introduce bias toward white male applicants. Also, letters of recommendation mean applicants have to be supported by existing members in the field, which can promote applicants with similar identities to those already in the field (i.e. white males) and discourage those with different identities.

Requirements for hiring at UB:

- PhD in relevant field
- CV (emphasizing publications, grants)
- Teaching philosophy statement
- Research statement

- (for finalists) at least 3 letters of support/reference from former professors, collaborators, or colleagues
- (for finalists) hour-long job talk focusing on current research and research directions

What we identified as key barriers within this current framework:

- Importance of extensive publication and grant history is likely a barrier, given these opportunities are not equally available at all institutions.
 - Letters of reference may introduce bias toward white male applicants.
 - Ability to travel to in-person interview (although plane tickets/lodging are paid for by the school, and other expenses are reimbursed).
- 4. 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?**

Our preliminary search found that there was no publicly available rubric or identified process online, rather we had to resort to directly asking those with inside knowledge (i.e. Chris Lowry, the Director of Graduate Studies, and students who had previously served on an application review board). We learned that:

- applicants are not anonymous
- individual PIs make the decision to submit applicants to the graduate committee, which follows their recommendations provided that funding is available
- Potential biases introduced are the biases of individual PIs, and likely include a bias toward shared qualities, risk aversion, and a bias toward prestige/coolness. Training regarding implicit bias for the faculty would help address this.

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

For faculty hires: Current faculty and some PhD students serve on a search committee and collaborate for interviews. Selection of members of the search committee is based partially on the group affiliation of the position (i.e., GVG group members hiring for a volcanology position, Environmental group members hiring for a hydrogeochemistry position), and partly on availability of faculty. Search committee members are encouraged (but not required) to take an online training from UB on “recruiting a diverse and excellent faculty”.

During the interview process, phone interviews are conducted by the search committee. In-person interviews involve meeting with current faculty individually, giving a lecture on their current research and research directions to the whole department (usually as part of existing Pegrum lecture series), and having meals with individual groups of faculty and/or students.

Final decisions for in-person interviews and hiring are made by the faculty as a whole, based on recommendations/evaluations by the search committee.

For graduate admissions: Essentially up to the PI who's lab they are entering, with input from other faculty. There is often a visit day in the spring for students joining in the Fall, when current students and other faculty interact with the applicants. Students who join in the Spring however won't necessarily have a visit day unless their PI sets one up, and even the visit day in the Spring seems to follow a pretty loose schedule given the different timelines and visions of PIs hiring students to their labs.

6. Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?

What Chris Lowry, the current DGS, told us:

- Geology admissions/hiring not evaluated by 3rd party (but DGS thinks it's a good idea)
- Happy to promote university/department scale internal evaluation
- Pushback: money spent on process, but SUNY has lots of \$\$\$
- No formal documentation of admissions/hiring changes
- GRE waiver based on Chemistry proposal, no robust format
- Department changes have to be approved by Dean of Graduate School
- Changes discussed at faculty meetings
- Admissions changes addressed by graduate committee -> faculty meeting
- Monthly faculty meetings have time reserved for DGS matters
- Human Resources in charge of hiring approach - not efficient

7. 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"⁶?

For hiring: new faculty are assigned a current faculty mentor who remains their mentor for several years; partner hires are supported by UB and the department, but dual career support for non-PhD spouses is not common (with the exception that spouses of international faculty can receive assistance in getting US work authorization); cohort hiring is not usually feasible because of the low number of open positions, but when multiple positions were open, some of the principles behind cohort hiring were considered (attempted to fill two simultaneous volcanology positions with people from different backgrounds and specialities; similar with other simultaneous hires).