

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

WHOI MC&G Pod 3

Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for WHOI

This is what was found by MC&G Pod 3 at WHOI on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

Overview of hiring and admission practices discussed by WHOI MC&G Pod 3

The discussion by our pod of hiring and admissions practices at WHOI crossed the range of levels at which somebody can become a member of the WHOI community – including undergraduate summer students, Joint Program (JP) graduate students, post-docs, and faculty hires.

Across all positions:

- Across all levels, we discussed the widespread homophily found at WHOI. There is a general sense that people at WHOI are likely to have been at WHOI before in a different role. For example, many current Joint Program students were previously undergraduates in the Summer Student Fellows (SSF) program; many faculty members were previously post-docs at WHOI or Joint Program students; and there is a sense that post-doc appointments are easier to obtain if you already have “WHOI-adjacent” connections (e.g., a PhD advisor who was a WHOI student/post-doc).
- Historically, the emphasis placed on DEI in hiring and admissions is inversely correlated with the seniority of the position being filled. DEI concerns have been most emphasized for SSF applicants and given the least attention for faculty hires.
- The current approach to evaluating candidates (for the JP, and possibly for other positions) can be a bit idiosyncratic and varies between committee members
- Boilerplate EEO statements are included at the end of all job postings, but additional wording around the value of DEI at WHOI are variable. Faculty postings typically include additional wording that explicitly states the value of a diverse community at WHOI, but other job postings (ranging from lab tech jobs to the director of NOSAMS) do not. SSF and JP info pages include information about DEI at WHOI, and the JP pages and faculty job postings include a link to the DEI at WHOI page. Similar information was not found on the post-doc info/application pages.

For Joint Program admission:

- The Joint Program admission and application process has received a relatively large amount of attention from DEI initiatives in recent years, although there is still lots of room for improvement
- Some Committee for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) initiatives have focused on academic recruitment to schools that we don't typically recruit from, especially via the “Through the Porthole” e-newsletter



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- The JP Applicant Support and Knowledgebase (JP ASK) pairs prospective applicants with current JP graduate students to answer questions about graduate school and the JP, and to assist with application preparation (e.g., by giving advice on reaching out to advisors or by giving feedback on personal statements)
- The JP application includes a personal statement, academic transcript, MIT application form, and letters of recommendation.
 - Notably, the MIT application is described by multiple applicants as “confusing,” and includes a section where applicants are asked to list the textbooks of the courses they took, which seems like nothing more than academic hazing.
 - The program typically requires submitting GRE scores, but did not consider GRE scores in 2020 due to the pandemic.
- WHOI has started tabling for the Joint Program at conferences that specifically serve underrepresented groups (e.g., AISES, SACNAS)

For faculty hires:

- This year (for the first time!) a DEI statement has been requested for faculty hires. There is an associated rubric for committees evaluating DEI statements.
- Applicants are evaluated first by their research output and funding potential, and then by their DEI contributions. This prioritization is possibly amplified by WHOI’s status as a soft money institution, which puts increased pressure on funding capacity.
- Candidate evaluation includes both faculty and student committees, and formal channels exist for input from the community to committees

Suggestions for improvement

- To address the problems associated with WHOI homophily, we suggest several possible approaches, each of which could increase the diversity of WHOI hires:
 - Emphasize hiring non-WHOI affiliated folks
 - Increase the diversity of pools of WHOI folks who frequently get future roles at WHOI (e.g., SSFs, JP, post-docs)
 - Increase the number of science opportunities available to those without significant lab experience – e.g., to undergrads who don’t have experience in another lab and therefore would be weaker candidates for the SSF program
- For all committees (both hiring and admissions), provide implicit bias training, rubrics, and support on what defines “success” for the people on the committees.
- Reevaluate the JP application and the evaluations of applications
 - Eliminate the GRE requirement
 - Create a rubric for application evaluation
 - Reevaluate application questions and reformat as necessary



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- Continue increased outreach to schools and departments which do not typically send students to the Joint Program
- Allow non-residential or virtual appointments – enabling students, post-docs, and faculty to be part of the WHOI community without navigating possible additional hurdles from living on Cape
- Create extra pots of money for people to access for DEI efforts – this could help weight DEI efforts more strongly when considering funding potential (e.g., for faculty hires)
- Assist scientists in recruiting guest students – e.g., by providing the list of students who had applied for SSF but did not receive a fellowship, and by incentivizing
- Consider DEI efforts as part of “impact” when evaluating faculty promotions