
Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University/Organization – URGE Deliverable

This is what was found by GeoEquity at Northwestern University on Hiring and 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 available²?**

EEO standards in hiring are dictated by Northwestern University. The exact wording is as follows:

"Northwestern University is an Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action Employer of all protected classes including veterans and individuals with disabilities. Women, racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans are encouraged to apply."

For our department's (Earth and Planetary Sciences, or EPS) grad student recruitment, the following is included with admissions information:

"The Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences is committed to cultivating an environment and explicitly values diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). As we look inwards, including evaluating department policies and practices through these lenses, we also ask that our applicants consider how they can contribute to an inclusive, supportive, and community-minded departmental culture."

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

Graduate recruitment advertisements are posted on the Northwestern University EPS website: <https://www.earth.northwestern.edu/graduate/grad-apply.html>. They are also advertised on the Graduate Student Association (GSA) job bulletin. Furthermore, the EPS department sends targeted graduate recruitment emails (for example, ~6,000 were sent in summer/fall of 2020). Prime recipients of these advertisements include:

1. All listed program officers and coordinators for NSF REU programs, asking for the email to be shared out with all students (~1000 contacts).
2. Chairs and directors of undergraduate studies in all STEM fields at URM (under-represented minorities) and diversity-identifying institutions (including HBCU's, HSI's, and Native American colleges). Contacts from these institutions' webpages are collected manually by paid work-study students.
3. 1000's of direct emails to prospective students manually selected from SACNAS, IGEN, and GEM databases to anyone broadly in the Earth Science pipeline, identified based on reading student statements and other available information.

Faculty hiring and award nominations (Nemmers Prize) are advertised as follows:

1. Paid advertisements on Geoscience professional societies such as NABGG, AWG, AGU, and GSA.

¹ R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples, (2017).

² <https://careers.who.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/>

³ K. Cobb, #GRExit Resources, <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13215461.v1>, (2020).

⁴ J. Posselt, Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity, and Faculty Gatekeeping, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjghw8s>, (2016).

⁵ <https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html>

⁶ K. Griffin, J. Bennett, T. York, Leveraging Promising Practices, Washington DC: Aspire Alliance, (2020).



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

2. Circulation via mailing lists, such as IAGD (International Association for Geoscience Diversity) and IsoGeoChem (if appropriate).

- **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?**

This year, faculty and the graduate recruitment committee have made many changes on the department website (<https://www.earth.northwestern.edu/graduate/grad-apply.html>). For example,

1. Faculty voted to remove the GRE requirement for applicants this year.
2. The process of prospective students emailing faculty, which is a very important part of the graduate recruitment process, is now explicitly outlined on the above EPS website:

“Graduate students accepted to the department have usually emailed and/or talked with potential Ph.D. advisors prior to applying. Therefore, it is imperative to familiarize yourself with the research interests of EPS faculty members and contact a potential advisor whose research aligns with your interests the summer or fall before the application deadline. We recommend sending a short email briefly describing why a faculty member’s research program interests you, and your key qualifications. It can also be helpful to attach a resume or CV in any format, to provide more details about your background and accomplishments. Visit faculty and lab web pages and look through a few faculty publications prior to contacting potential advisors. These steps can help you to articulate what excites you about a faculty member’s research program. Do not be shy; we love hearing from enthusiastic future Ph.D.s!”

3. Tips are provided for letters of recommendation on the website, and an explicit outline is available for applicants' use. *In the future, we could also encourage applicants to provide a "brag sheet" to their letter writers.* The following is a note to writers of letters of recommendation provided on the website:

“Thank you for supporting an applicant to our Ph.D. program by writing a letter of recommendation. We have recently revised our Ph.D. application requirements, and as such we are providing updated guidance to letter-writers. We have removed the GRE requirement, so if you have knowledge of the applicant’s quantitative abilities and/or writing and speaking skills, please prioritize commenting on those. We appreciate any perspective you can provide on the applicant’s preparedness for graduate school, especially for conducting independent research. Capacity for growth in these areas is also highly valued, especially for applicants who had limited opportunities to pursue independent research as undergraduates. In addition to evaluating traditional academic skills, we also seek future Ph.D.s who are creative, highly curious, adaptable, self-motivated, organized, professional and able to handle a variety of tasks in parallel. Commitment to collaboration, outreach, or community service is also of interest. Thank you!”

4. Essay prompts are clearly outlined.
5. The intention of additional requested materials is clearly outlined.

Furthermore, information on application fee waivers is also provided on the website. *However, fee waivers are under the discretion of Northwestern University, and we have noticed that the*



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

university's criteria are rather strict, including having to be US citizens/permanent residents, and having at least a 3.0 GPA. We could bring this up to NU in the near future to see if these criteria can be made more inclusive.

Finally, our graduate recruitment process includes funding and coordination for on-campus visits for all short-listed graduate applicants who can legally travel to campus. If the EPS department funding is not sufficient to cover international travel costs, the department pro-actively works with the candidate and their other college visit destinations to “cost-split” and ensure their travel to visit our graduate school despite international travel barriers such as expense.

Our graduate student applicant offers are undertaken with no consideration to nationality, and we have no limits on the number of internationals offered or accepted into the graduate program. The recruited international graduate students receive the exact same funding packages in value, scope, and duration, which include ~\$34k annual stipend, medical insurance, and full tuition costs. *However, there is not an explicit stating of these inclusivity standards for international students on the admissions website, which could provide for further accessibility and is something we will explore more.*

- **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?**

Graduate students do not have access to complete details on graduate applicant evaluation, but to the best of our knowledge, we do not use a rubric. Given that the graduate recruitment process is heavily PI-based (outlined further below), it is difficult to pinpoint universal biases.

Faculty applications are evaluated based on research expertise, publications, letters of recommendation, and interview performance. *However, this hiring process is not made public on the EPS website, and we could work in the future to increase transparency in applicant or faculty evaluation.*

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

For graduate student recruitment, the individual faculty who are recruiting new students have the say on who is invited to our prospective student weekend. The PI makes their top choice(s) of student(s) to admit, and then a faculty meeting commences. During this meeting, at least one other faculty member (besides the applicant's PI) must agree to admit a student. This is likely due to the “two proposal” structure of our program, requiring two different faculty advise the student on separate proposals. The admissions decisions are made considering the probability that a student will accept the offer. Sometimes, more admitted students accept offers than anticipated. In that case, the next year fewer students will be admitted. The departments' goal is to maintain a relatively constant graduate student population, with on average 5-8 students admitted per year. This is likely the result of our funding structure, that we can guarantee five years of support for every student. In this way, admissions are decided on by the entire faculty.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

For faculty hiring, the search committee is assembled by the department chair and is ultimately responsible for developing a short-list of candidates to be considered for in-person interviews. The search committee is typically comprised of three EPS members (one of whom serves as the Equity Representative) and one NU faculty member from outside the department to mitigate biases. However, all applications are made available to every faculty member in the department so that anyone can voluntarily have a say at any time during the process. EPS faculty meet and vote on interview shortlist. This shortlist is then sent to the Dean's office, who approves or disapproves of the invitee list. After all interviews have taken place, the faculty meet to discuss and vote on a finalist. During this meeting, graduate student feedback is presented to the faculty before voting occurs.

Overall, a large portion of the department (faculty, staff and graduate students) interacts with every applicant. However, the faculty/students most aligned with the primary field of study interact the most with the prospective faculty or student.

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

No, we have not been evaluated by outside consultants. *In the future, we could ask applicants to take a survey about the hiring/admission process; this information would be kept confidential until the decision is made. Furthermore, this could better help identify how applicants heard about the opportunity and what changes need to be made for the sake of inclusivity and outreach. We have also brainstormed a workshop where faculty could identify their biases in reading applications, perhaps in the form of reviewing mock applications, to help with both graduate recruitment and faculty hiring.*

All aspects of the Department including graduate recruitment, graduate program, faculty hiring, and outcomes were critically examined by a combined external/internal review committee organized by the Provost Office in 2015. The two day campus visit included committee time with graduate students and undergraduate, without department faculty/staff present. Our graduate recruitment was not called out in the summary action list for attention (as shared by the Chair; reports and documents are not available for circulation). It is unknown how much direction the review committee had from the Provost Office in examining the graduate student recruitment and hiring, within their broad mandate.

- **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?**

It seems that these are conversations happening among the faculty, but graduate students do not have much insight into this. *It will be a goal of ours to continue cultivating these lines of communication within our department so that we can collectively explore these strategies.*



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

We also agree that, given the small size of our department, it is important to build supporting partnerships/facilitate relationships between EPS faculty and other departments' faculty. *Right now, similar ideas are in the planning stages, but examples are as follows:*

1. *A postdoctoral-faculty track.*
2. *To formulate more formal partnerships across disciplines/arrange formal meetings to help introduce new hires to other departments within the University.*
3. *Partner hires, which are possible but would need to be negotiated on a larger University level.*