

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



URGE Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University/Organization

This is what was found by Rutgers University Pod at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (hereafter referred to as Rutgers University) in conducting an audit of the hiring and admissions process at our institution.

We limited our audit to faculty and post doctoral research associate (post doc) hiring and graduate admissions. We described University-wide policies, where applicable, but in most cases hiring and admissions procedures are School and/or Department or graduate program specific. In these cases, we have provided some specific examples from a handful of science-focused Departments/graduate programs. We present both existing policies and steps the University is currently taking to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the hiring and admissions processes.

In this first draft, we present only the hiring policies for faculty. We will upload an updated document containing the post doc hiring and graduate admissions policies within the next week.

Hiring

Overview

On the first day of his job in July 2020, Rutgers University's new President Jonathan Holloway expressed his commitment to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion, and he commissioned a University Equity Audit as a first step toward that pledge. In support of this endeavor and to lead the audit process, Holloway appointed Enobong (Anna) Branch, who oversees the Division of Diversity, Inclusion and Community engagement at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, to Rutgers' first senior Vice President for Equity. The Executive Summary and full report from this audit are openly accessible [here](#). The audit identified several areas that require focused attention to support the level of essential institutional change highlighted by President Holloway, including these [five priorities](#), some of which were spurred by an earlier Rutgers University-Newark Commission on Diversity and Transformation established by Chancellor Nancy Cantor in 2015: 1) Recruit, retain, and develop a diverse community, 2) Promote inclusive scholarship and teaching, 3) Define sustainable and substantive community engagements, 4) Build the capacity of leaders to create inclusive climates, and 5) Develop an institutional infrastructure to drive change. In terms of the focus on hiring and promotions, the key findings in the audit reported in the Executive Summary states: "Several responses focused on the technical aspects

of recruiting and retention, such as where job openings are posted and how job descriptions are written, as well as offering exit interviews to better understand and identify issues related to departure. Others focused on more cultural/structural elements of recruitment, such as purposeful development of internal talent for promotion, training of hiring personnel, and routine audit/assessment of hiring practices and outcomes. A key recommendation was to diversify vendors and consultants, targeting more minority-owned firms for consideration as Rutgers vendors". To address the five priority areas highlighted in the audit, the Office of the Senior Vice President for Equity, led by Enobong (Anna) Branch, and Chancellor-led units began a University-wide diversity strategic planning process in December 2020. This process, detailed [here](#), entails several steps but aims to culminate in a University-wide Implementation Plan by the end of 2021.

In the following two sections, we summarize Rutgers University's existing policies and resources focused on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as discuss steps and strategies Rutgers is taking to close the gap between practice and aspiration and make institutional change.

Existing Policies and Resources for Faculty Hiring

Existing hiring policies are addressed in the italicized answers to these following questions, and we have narrowed our audit to faculty hires:

- What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available?

Yes, EEO statements are required and included on all job advertisements Rutgers-wide. However, the specific wording will vary between Schools and Departments within Rutgers. For example, an EEO statement specific to a job advertisement for a faculty position in the Department of Marine & Coastal Sciences states "As an equal opportunity employer and a campus with a continually growing diverse faculty and student body, Rutgers University encourages applications from women, minorities, and individuals with a commitment to mentoring under-represented demographics in marine science. We encourage applicants to comment in their cover letter and their statements on how their research, teaching, service and outreach activities contribute to enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusiveness."

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

Postings of job advertisements are dependent on the specific position and the hiring School or Department. Traditionally, these are posted on various Society job boards (e.g., Ecological Society of America, American Fisheries Society, American Geophysical Union, Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography). However, a

recent faculty search in the Department of Marine & Coastal Sciences implemented new advertising strategies to increase the potential for diverse applicants. Job advertisements were also shared with specific communities aimed at promoting diversity in the sciences (Society for Advancing Chicano/Hispanic and Native Americans in Science, DiversifyEEB, NOAA EPP/MSI Cooperative Science Centers that are HBCU and Hispanic serving). Additionally, the committee shared the job advertisement with nearly 50 directors of international marine science focused programs for circulation amongst their academic communities.

- 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?

For faculty appointments, applicants are typically asked to provide in their application a cover letter, their curriculum vitae (CV), a 3-page vision statement for their research program specific to the advertised position, a statement of teaching experience and interests, and the names of 3 references with the ability to provide evaluations for which letters can be solicited. In a recent faculty search in the Department of Marine & Coastal Sciences, applicants were not asked to submit an independent Diversity Statement but were encouraged to comment in their cover letter and their statements on how their research, teaching, service and outreach activities contribute to enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.

- How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?

Rutgers University does not prescribe to using a specific, similar rubric or evaluation procedure for all faculty hires and therefore, evaluation procedures are not consistent within or amongst Schools and Departments. This likely contributes to systemic bias issues. Applicant names are not removed during the evaluation process, and applicants self-identify in the application profile. Some departments/committees will use a rubric, some will not. Those rubrics that are used are typically designed ad hoc by the search committee. Additionally, there are no procedures (or training) in place to evaluate candidates based on those rubrics (or without a rubric), making the decisions for placing candidates on a 'short list' and eventually recommending them for the position, unpredictable.

The Division of Diversity, Inclusion and Community engagement at Rutgers University-New Brunswick currently offers resources aimed at addressing University diversity priorities. One such example is the faculty recruitment training for diversity and excellence, based from the Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence" (STRIDE) program first launched at the University of Michigan in 2002 (see [here](#)), and instructed at Rutgers University by Enobong (Anna) Branch. One

resource provided is a template candidate evaluation tool as well as a rubric for evaluating applicant diversity statements. This training program also recommends including a designated Diversity Advocate on each faculty search committee, who is tasked to ensure the committee is following recommended strategies promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion through all the steps of the hiring process (recruitment to offer).

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

Searches for non-tenure-track (NTT) and staff are handled either by the Department Chair (NTT) or the Department Chair/Director and/or Supervisor (staff). For tenure-track or tenured faculty searches, the faculty members serving each search committee are appointed by the Dean of the hiring School. For these searches, a search committee chair will typically be the main contact person for applicants during the application and interviewing process. During the candidate interview process for those applicants that make the 'short list', those selected candidates will, at a minimum, meet with the full search committee as well as additional faculty in the hiring Department, the Department Chair, and the Dean of the School. After the candidate interviews, the search committee will recommend which candidate to hire, and the Dean of the School makes the final decision and offer.

- Has your hiring process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?

No, the Rutgers University's hiring process has not been evaluated by outside consultants. However, the aforementioned University Equity Audit and University-wide diversity strategic planning process are currently internally evaluating this process and will likely put forth recommendations addressing this in the upcoming Implementation Plan.

- 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"?

We were not aware of any cases of cohort hiring, but spousal hires have occurred and have been part of the science culture in faculty recruitment/hiring for some time. Conversations are ongoing about how this could perpetuate the equity problem - getting more of the same rather than broadening the diversity of the faculty. Again, strategies that Rutgers University will adopt will soon be made clear in the upcoming equity Implementation Plan.

The aforementioned STRIDE training is available at regular intervals for those interested in attending, and has been highly recommended for faculty serving on faculty search committees.

This training provides several specific strategies aimed at recruiting great applicants, achieving excellence and diversity in short lists, managing candidate visits, and attracting and choosing a candidate. Multiple resources are available to aid in all of these steps for successful faculty recruitment, including evaluation tools for candidates and their diversity statements and a Best Practices in Supporting Faculty Recruitment document (these resources are available on the STRIDE website referenced earlier in this paragraph).

On Track for Change

Through the aforementioned ongoing efforts of the University Equity Audit and University-wide diversity strategic planning process, it is evident that Rutgers University has identified significant gaps between its practices and aspirations for promoting and retaining diversity but is committed to closing these gaps that will ultimately bring institutional change toward building a [beloved community](#). Over the course of the next year, and once the strategic planning process moves into the implementation phase, the specific strategies Rutgers University will adopt to address this will be more clear.

Specifically related to the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM), Rutgers University just joined the American Association for the Advancement of Science's (AAAS) STEMM Equity Achievement (SEA) Change initiative (see [here](#)). There are now a total of twelve institutions that have joined this effort. Upon joining SEA Change, Anna Branch stated this initiative "takes a systemic approach by asking institutions to self-assess and create individualized plans to break down barriers, rather than putting the onus on people who have faced marginalization or discrimination."