

Hiring and Admissions Policies for CSU Geosciences

This is what was found by the CSU Geosciences Pod at Colorado State University on Hiring and Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?**

Some form of the following three statements is required on CSU job applications as specified by the Office of Equal Opportunity ([OEO](#)). It is noted that some faculty members involved in hiring were not aware of these statements. We recommend that all members of hiring committees are aware of these statements to embody the department's commitment to DE&I.

Equal Employment Opportunity Statement

“Colorado State University is committed to providing an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment based on race, age, creed, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, gender, disability, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or pregnancy and 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. Colorado State University is an equal opportunity/equal access/affirmative action employer fully committed to achieving a diverse workforce and complies with all Federal and Colorado State laws, regulations, and executive orders regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action.”

Background Check Statement

“Colorado State University strives to provide a safe study, work, and living environment for its faculty, staff, volunteers and students. To support this environment and comply with applicable laws and regulations, CSU conducts background checks. The type of background check conducted varies by position and can include, but is not limited to, criminal history, sex offender registry, motor vehicle history, financial history, and/or education verification. Background checks will also be conducted when required by law or contract and when, in the discretion of the University, it is reasonable and prudent to do so.”

Diversity Statement – alternative versions available at OEO link above.

“Reflecting departmental and institutional values, candidates are expected to have the ability to advance the Department's commitment to diversity and inclusion.”



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

According to faculty involved in hiring, the geoscience department advertises department positions primarily on free, online job boards. Some faculty members noted that the process of advertising was largely based on previous listserv subscriptions with more specific advertising avenues left to committee members. One faculty member noted that they personally “*advertised the job on both an Earth systems job listserv as well as on a tribal/environmental listserv composed of people who won a specific scholarship in college.*” Recently, the department has sought out job boards hosted by organizations with diverse membership, as well as more mainline outlets.

The geosciences department hiring process is strongly guided by the OEO. Advertising is conducted such that the department hiring committee develops an advertising plan and the OEO subsequently approves the plan. The OEO provides several hiring and advertising resources that are aimed at targeting underrepresented groups, including a list of job boards. Resources can be found [here](#). The list of job boards used by the geosciences department was not provided, but a cursory search for “CSU Geoscience Department Jobs” resulted in at least one application opportunity at “[onlineteacherjobs.com](#)”. Though the department works closely with the OEO, it was not clear whether targeted advertising resources from the OEO were utilized during hiring.

For admissions, CSU Geosciences advertises primarily through booths at major conferences (AGU, GSA) and by maintaining updated web and hard-copy advertising materials. Multiple department faculty noted that the department has minimal influence over undergraduate admissions though is working with the college to enhance the “range and accessibility” of undergraduate information used in recruitment. There are also one or two scholarship programs targeted at incoming freshmen. The department does seek out transfers from within CSU through working to raise the profile of the major. Approximately half, to greater than half, of department undergraduate majors arrive through external or internal transfers from other institutions. Internet searches did not turn up other results for online student recruitment. Faculty members have indicated that they are interested in suggestions related to graduate admission recruitment.

For faculty recruitment, we recommend that the department actively pursue evidence-based strategies for increasing the diversity of faculty applicant pools. Recruitment is often a multistage process that involves generating interest in positions, encouraging candidates to apply, and navigating the selection process, job offering, and position acceptance. Strategies like establishing relationships with BIPOC individuals well in advance of positions opening, engaging in ongoing recruitment, and leveraging relationships with early career scholars have been demonstrated to help with building diverse applicant

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

pools ⁶. Examples might include targeting underrepresented scholars for postdoctoral programs or designating lecture series spots for early-career BIPOC scientists.

We acknowledge the limited availability of postdoctoral positions within the CSU Geosciences department, and we recommend that in addition to expanding the department lectures series to graduate students, that department faculty consider building relationships with diverse scholars through the seminar series. Additionally, we recommend that future online hiring boards are explicitly chosen to increase the reach to BIPOC students and faculty candidates. This might include targeting hiring boards that advertise to underrepresented populations (e.g. [link](#)). Since board selection has, up until this point, been left to individual faculty members, a requirement that faculty select at least one job board that is intended to reach a broader, diverse audience might insure this outcome.

For admissions, we recommend the department improve current methods for attracting undergraduate and graduate students from underrepresented populations. General strategies that have proven effective include: 1.) demonstrating relevance of the field and opportunities for high-paying careers; 2.) developing partnerships among multiple stakeholders to reduce 'leaks' from the educational pipeline; 3.) promoting strong mentoring relationships among students and geoscience professionals; 4.) including opportunities for students to conduct research prior to graduate school; and 5.) providing financial assistance when necessary ⁷.

Structured programs which increase opportunities for students from underrepresented populations should also be considered. For example, AGU's Bridge Program (<https://www.agu.org/bridge-program>) benefits both prospective graduate students and institutions by connecting strong, diverse applicants with institutions that have demonstrated the ability to support a diverse student body. Along with the Bridge Program, the Inclusive Graduate Education Network ([IGEN](#)) has "defined standards for recruiting, admitting, and retaining students to develop, adopt, and share the best inclusive practices".

- **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?**

Applying to faculty positions at CSU requires 3 letters of recommendation and does not require transcripts or fees. Applicants are evaluated against required and preferred criteria generated with the job posting and approved by the OEO. Faculty members on the hiring committee for a recent Academic Success Coordinator position noted that they were not aware of, or did not engage with the requested recommendation letters or results from references and that requirements were primarily based on having a Bachelors and 2-3 years of working experience or a Masters Degree.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

Applying for undergraduate admission requires a \$50 application fee which is waived for students facing financial hardships as well as for all students on Colorado Free Application Day (Oct. 13, 2020). Other requirements include official transcripts, a personal statement, and one recommendation. SAT / ACT scores are optional.

Applying for graduate admission requires a \$60 fee, a GPA >3.3, GRE scores, strong endorsements in three recommendation letters, and English proficiency. In 2020, graduate test scores were waived as a requirement due to COVID. There is ongoing discussion about making this change permanent to promote more equitable admissions processes since high test scores are strongly correlated with white and wealthy demographics, not with greater success in graduate students or higher first-author publication rates.

The OEO reviews all posted hiring questions and requirements. The OEO also has extensive resources for asking appropriate questions and questions which can help assess commitment to and understanding of inclusivity from potential hires

<https://admin.ks.gov/offices/personnel-services/recruitment/behavioral-interview-generator>

We recommend that the CSU Geosciences Department explicitly require a diversity statement from faculty / staff applicants. Further, we recommend that candidates commitments to AJEDI within geosciences is explicitly discussed during the interview process, not just written in a statement. Anecdotal evidence suggests that involving students in the interview process may help assess candidates commitments to diversity within geosciences.

For admissions, we recommend that GRE scores be permanently removed from admissions requirements for reasons stated above. We understand that alternative metrics for comparison will need to be created. We suggest the use of rubrics to accomplish this. Rubrics are discussed later in this document, and an example is included at the end of this document.

- **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?**

Job applicants are evaluated against required and preferred criteria generated with the job posting and approved by the OEO. The rubric is not made public. For a recent non-faculty department position, the hiring process involved first pairing applications down to a “long” short list based on explicit requirements and applicable, direct experience. Hiring committee members then individually ranked candidates using a rubric, then came together to discuss rankings. One faculty member noted that *“for [some positions], removing names would be relatively easy, even through the final short list. However, it would probably take quite a bit of effort on the part of HR to make sure it happens and to get people to submit CVs that don’t have self-identifying information on them... one would need to make very very*



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

clear in the instructions that no self-identifying information should be supplied and, secondly, someone else (not on the committee) would need to pour through the documentation to ensure no self-identifying information was given."

Diversity is not explicitly considered in admissions, though the department is committed to supporting a diverse student body and has a long history of supporting international students. It was noted that most students meet the standards for admission and that applicant denial is generally due to advisor time/funding constraints. Since admission is primarily based on availability of funds and projects, admissions are largely driven by individual faculty members. However, every application is reviewed by an ad hoc committee (generally 5 faculty members) appointed by the chair of the grad committee. Rubrics are not currently used to assess prospective students though it is currently up for discussion.

One faculty member noted that in their opinion, biases are part of the current admissions process, adding that it is challenging to evaluate applications without inserting some preference based on individual experiences. In their perspective, some challenges to removing bias include grade inflation at universities, not requiring GRE test scores, the preference for undergraduate research yet lack of opportunity at certain institutions, and the fact that most recommenders evaluate all candidates as "excellent".

We recommend that the CSU Geosciences Department identify and discuss potential biases that are part of the current search process. This practice is already recommended by the OEO. Once identified, a possible solution to remove bias might include a "hiring guidance document" similar to this one produced by the CSU extension school which was designed to remove biases and improve the reach of hiring processes:

<https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/staffres/hiring/Hiring-for-the-21st-Century-Guidance-Document.pdf>. Some example suggestions from this document include (among many other great suggestions):

- **When writing position description**
 - identify key demographic information for the service area of the position to include in the position description.
 - Thoughtfully consider "preferred and required" criteria related to DE&I
 - Include proven abilities to build relationships and communicate effectively with a diverse and inclusive set of stakeholders as an important criterion.
- **Before interviews**
 - Review hiring guidance documents and CSU's Hiring for the 21st Century video
 - Review questions to make sure none of them screen out or discourage women, minorities, veterans, or individuals with disabilities.
 - Design questions that will allow candidates to demonstrate strengths and teach new ways to provide services



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- Consider questions specific to DE&I – e.g. “What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with diverse backgrounds?” or “What efforts have you made or been involved with to foster diversity competence and understanding?”
- **During interviews**
 - Be aware of common personal biases in interviews:
 - Making judgements too early in the process.
 - Halo effect (last candidate was so bad that present looks good)
 - Personal similarity
 - Verbal facility (This is the ability to speak well. Bias can apply when interviewing candidates who do not speak English as their first language).
 - False criteria (not using appropriate job-related criteria to determine if someone is qualified for the position).

Through the OEO and URGE readings, we identified some potential biases that may exist in the hiring / admissions process and which CSU Geosciences should consider:

- Age
- Accent
- Appearance
- Geographic location
- Educational history
- Personality
- Affiliations / interests
- Dual career couple
- Work experience

We also recommend that CSU Geosciences consider implementing rubrics in future hiring and admissions processes. Rubrics can promote more holistic evaluation of candidates and can reduce the influence of bias by focusing on evaluation criteria. Creating the rubric should be done with bias prevention in mind and can include options to weight certain criteria. An example rubric that UC Davis Geology uses for graduate admissions is attached.

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

Search committees are normally appointed by the charging party or hiring authority. The hiring authority is the person who will be the boss of the person hired at the department level and is typically the department head. For the recent Academic Success Coordinator (ASC) position, the department head selected the committee members. The criteria used to select search committee members was not shared with members, though faculty with experience navigating the process and new faculty were both selected. The OEO must approve the



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

search committee, and gives preference to diverse search committees. Though, it was noted that the geoscience department generally lacks diversity in faculty members and therefore search committees in most categories except gender. Final hiring decisions are made by the department head, but typically follow the recommendation of the faculty as a whole.

Search Chair Training Participants in the Geosciences dept (have completed the search chair training and are eligible to chair a search):

Rick Aster, Sven Egenhoff, Judy Hannah, Dennis Harry, Stephanie O'Meara, Jill Putman, Sara Rathburn, John Ridley, Bill Sanford, Derek Schutt, Sally Sutton, Ellen Wohl

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

The department hiring process has not been evaluated by an outside consultant, though it is regularly moderated by the OEO.

- **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?**
 - **Cohort hiring** - unsure
 - **Mentoring** - “To some degree”
 - **Dual career support** - unsure
 - **Partner hires** – the department has participated in
 - **Re-visioning work culture**
 - **Leveraging Promising Practices**

The geosciences department at CSU has discussed incorporating more holistic hiring and admissions review practices, though has not adopted strict policy to implement change. A recent department email, which was previously shared with faculty participating in admissions and hiring, was shared with the URGE pod during this process. The email outlined holistic review processes which included consideration of diversity, assessing academic merit based on access and application, using predefined criteria, and equity minded judgement. One exception to this is the removal of test score admission requirements. It seems this may have been driven by COVID initially, but the consideration for permanent removal seems based on intentions for more equitable admissions processes.

We recommend that the CSU geosciences department follow the holistic hiring and admissions procedures outlined in the document mentioned above, as well as review other resources such as “Leveraging Promising Practices” to implement change through hard-written procedure.



Resources:

¹ R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eoo-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).

⁷ J. Huntoon, Lane, M, Diversity in the Geosciences and Successful Strategies for Increasing Diversity, DOI 10.5408/1089-9995-55.6.447.(2017)



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

Example Rubric from UC Davis Geology Admissions

Name:		
Research Interests:		
	Strengths or weaknesses and evidence for these in the admissions package	Score (1-4, NI)
Student is persistent and adaptable	<i>look for examples of a growth mindset in life or academia; 1st gen student, immigrant family, socio-economic disadvantages</i>	
Student is motivated to pursue scientific research	<i>look for curiosity, love of problem solving, commitment to learning</i>	
Student has taken advantage of (or made) opportunities in seeking out research experiences	<i>consider type of institution and what sort of opportunities would or would not be present</i>	
Student can work well independently and is self-directed.	<i>look for description of projects or actions taken on own initiative either in or out of academics</i>	
Student works well with others and responds well to constructive feedback	<i>look for evidence of leadership, or contribution to shared or team goals</i>	
Student communicates in a clear, organized and logical manner.	<i>Assess writing in submitted statements, as well as any publications taking into account students academic level and role in the publication.</i>	
Academic record includes appropriate coursework and level of competence to build from for graduate level research in expressed subdiscipline.		<i>look for topic-specific foundational coursework (geo/earth/env sci., math, physics, chem, bio), breadth and challenging coursework, UG and Grad GPA, research projects</i>
Overall Ranking (A, B, C)	<i>Notes</i>	

Recommended Reading Order

1. Student's statements
2. Transcripts
3. Recommendation Letters

Take notes while reading and keep these for discussion in the admission committee.

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

<u>Scores</u>	
1. Unsatisfactory	little evidence of this skill or cognitive ability, or evidence to the contrary
2. Developing	minimal evidence or only in the early stages
3. Competent	sufficient evidence with some examples or points that clearly attest to a high level of preparation or achievement in this area
4. Exemplary	strong evidence which meets all expectations for preparation for graduate school
NI	no information provided in the package
<u>Overall Ranking</u>	
A(+)	<i>Do not use +/-, except for A+</i> Strong application with evidence addressing and supporting all metrics. (+) Recruiting target: exceptional application on all metrics.
B	Potentially admissible, but there is evidence missing for one more metrics, that would need to be addressed when starting in the graduate program. Potential advisor need to address how these metrics can be addressed.
C	Lacking evidence on multiple metrics; inappropriate background or coursework preparation for expressed topic of study; expressed topics of interest have no overlap with potential mentors in our program