

## BU Earth & Environment Pod 1

*Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE; [www.urgeoscience.org](http://www.urgeoscience.org)) is a community-wide journal-reading and policy-design curriculum to help Geoscientists unlearn racism and improve accessibility, justice, equity, and inclusion (AJEDI) in our discipline. URGE's primary objectives are to (1) deepen the community's knowledge of the effects of racism on the participation and retention of black, brown, and indigenous people in Geoscience<sup>1</sup>, (2) use the existing literature, expert opinion, and personal experiences to develop anti-racist policies and strategies<sup>2,3</sup>, and (3) share, discuss, and modify anti-racist policies and strategies within a dynamic community network and on a national stage. By meeting these objectives, we hope that Geoscience departments and societies will be able to implement a well-researched crowdsourced group of anti-racist policies.*

### **Deliverable - Admissions and Hiring Policies**

***This deliverable is an audit of the hiring and, if applicable, the admissions process of your organization. As you investigate postings and advertisements, the application and evaluation processes, equal opportunity/inclusion language, and required fees or test scores, please also include proposed improvements that would increase the diversity of not only your applicant pools but also your new hires/admissions and the retention of these individuals.***

The BU E&E Pod Audited the Recruitment (including Outreach, Admission, and Yield) and Transition portions of the Admission Process within the Department. For each portion, we reflected on the current state of affairs and underlying problems, as well as proposed improvements.

- **Outreach**: This process mostly includes email correspondence with faculty and participation in conferences such as SACNAS. We observed that the majority of this process is invisible, uncoordinated, and unaccountable. **Our primary recommendation is for the department to document its outreach practices**, including 1) how faculty engage in email correspondence with prospective students, 2) how faculty encourage or discourage students to apply, 3) what external outreach the department engages in, including conference participation and social media, and 4) how current graduate students are involved with outreach and ambassadorship (for example, speaking with prospective students, answering emails, attending conferences) and how students are compensated or supported in these efforts.
- **Admission**: This process similarly appeared invisible, uncoordinated, and unaccountable, with faculty-specific preferences driving decisions, including the the prestige of former institutions, high GPA, publication record, and prior research, all of which have been identified as bias-laden traits that do not necessarily predict success in graduate school nor advance diversity within the discipline. Of greatest concern is that decisions appear to be primarily in the hands of individual faculty, with few opportunities for colleagues with diverse values to add considerations or challenge assumptions. **Our primary recommendation is for the department to document (and make public) all the steps of the admission process and where different types of value judgments are made.** The department next needs to articulate what it values in successful graduate students (for example, creative thinking, content knowledge) and identify moments where biases may be counterproductive to department goals (for example, dismissing an application from a school that offers few research opportunities, at the expense of a

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creative and content-knowledgeable applicant). We also recommend considering opportunities to *centralize* the process, so that more reviewers consider each application, and can bring additional perspectives and priorities (also being trained in implicit bias). The university is taking steps to make graduate admissions more equitable by holding an equity in graduate admissions seminar and workshop. There will be representatives from the department graduate admissions committee at this meeting. They should use this workshop as a jumping off point for the above.

- Yield: This process appears to consist of an Open House hosted by the department and individual communication by faculty. It was unclear what, if any, coordination may occur to ensure that all admits feel warmly welcomed into the department and given sufficient opportunities to meet with current students and ask questions. **Our primary recommendation is for the department to articulate a list of action items/experiences that every admitted student should engage in.** For example, perhaps every admitted student should hear directly from their faculty advisor and have a chance to meet two current students. Some faculty already do this while some do not. The department should ensure every student gets the same basic treatment, whether via faculty or a centralized committee. We also recommend the department survey admitted students that *did not* accept the offer from BU, to learn why they did not come so as to improve our practices.
- Transition: We were unable to identify consistent or uniform efforts to help students transition into their graduate program, with the exception of the GSA reaching out to students to welcome them, especially international students. While many faculty or labs likely have their own process, we were concerned about inequities in who has a smooth and energizing transition and who might feel left out or isolated. **Our primary recommendation is for the department to articulate what an ideal transition would look like for every student and coordinate with faculty to ensure it happens.** We also suggest considering financial mechanisms to ease the process, especially for international, URM or first-gen students who may particularly benefit from the extra support. These could include allocating funds for summer research prior to starting or funds to pay for temporary lodging (e.g., hotel rooms) while students search for apartments. We also recommend a peer mentor program between incoming and current students, and equipping current students with the checklist of tasks that incoming students should accomplish, and the resources/knowledge to help them do so effectively.