

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Hiring and Admissions Policies for The Ohio State University's School of Earth Sciences and Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center

This is what was found by the Byrd Polar URGE Pod at The Ohio State University on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve. The Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center (henceforth, BPCRC) has limited hiring and no admissions capabilities, but the School of Earth Sciences (henceforth, SES), to which many of our URGE Pod members belong, is a unit with full hiring and admissions capabilities. Our discussion below will focus separately on the BPCRC Postdoctoral Fellowship and BPCRC scholarships, and the hiring and admissions procedures for SES.

Note: We acknowledge this information is not always accessible to students and even staff. If you do not have access to this information, please reflect on your own experience and outline what admissions and/or hiring should be like to foster a diverse and inclusive community.

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

School of Earth Sciences: For Faculty Searches

As of 2019, when we last ran a search:

The Ohio State University is committed to addressing faculty members' family needs, including dual career couples, and single parents. The Ohio State University is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation or identity, national origin, disability status, or protected veteran status.

School of Earth Sciences: For Graduate Admissions

We are not aware of any such statement. The SES website does have an anti-racism statement for the community: <https://earthsciences.osu.edu/about-us/anti-racism-statement>

Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center (for scholarships)

Listed on BPCRC Fellowship Application:

The Ohio State University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer. Qualified women, minorities, Vietnam-era Veterans, disabled Veterans and individuals with disabilities are

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).

encouraged to apply. Successful completion of a background check is required for all final candidates.

Neither the Rick Toracinta Scholarship Application nor the McKenzie/Brecher Scholarship has a similar statement.

We recommend improvements such as:

- ∅ Adding inclusion statements for our BPCRC scholarship and SES admissions.

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

School of Earth Sciences: For Faculty Searches

For the faculty search in 2019 (which was for an ecohydrologist), we advertised in both Earth Sciences and Ecology specific sites:

- National Registry of Diverse & Strategic Faculty
- Earth Science Women's Network <https://eswnonline.org/>
- Society for Freshwater Science (<https://freshwater-science.org/classifieds>)
- Ecological Society of America (Ecolog-List). I
- Josh's water jobs (<https://www.joshswaterjobs.com>)
- ESA Physiological Ecology <http://ecophys-jobs.org/positions.html>
- OSU SES website
- DT Career Opportunity
- The SWS Wetland Jobs Board (<http://www.sws.org/Resources/the-sws-wetland-jobs-board.html>)
- cryolist
- CUAHSI (<https://www.cuahsi.org/community/job-board/>)
- Texas A&M Job Board <https://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/job-board/>

School of Earth Sciences: Graduate Admissions

To our knowledge, SES currently has few recruitment or advertising procedures in place. SES has maintained a recruitment booth at the GSA Fall Meeting, which has been staffed only by graduate student TAs and volunteers for several years. Advertisement for specific projects or positions in each research group are the responsibility of each faculty advisor, although the SES Communication team is making strides toward advertising these on social media. The SES Graduate Student Club is working toward hosting general recruitment materials (such as virtual lab tours, application tips, etc.) on its own website and advertising them via social media.

Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center: for Fellowships & scholarships

The BPCRC Postdoctoral Fellowship application is advertised by the BPCRC Communication team on social media and sent to:

- cryolist

We recommend improvements such as:

- ∅ **Working toward sending to diverse networks. This will be specific to each faculty advisor for admissions**
 - ∅ **Identifying a liaison for advertising, who can maintain a shared file consisting of a list of networks, share among other departments**
 - ∅ In future, search committees should consider taking their limited budgets and advertising in places that specifically represent underrepresented groups, such as Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, SACNAS, Women in Higher Education, Hispanic Outlook, Tribal College Journal, and DiverseJobs.net. Each of these charges on the order of a few hundred dollars, so having a budget of even \$1k devoted to such journals could go a long way.
- **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?**

School of Earth Sciences: For Faculty Searches

Unknown.

School of Earth Sciences: For Graduate Admissions

SES lists the application process for prospective undergraduate and graduate students on its website: <https://earthsciences.osu.edu/academics/prospective-students> (and links therein). Specific requirements for graduate admissions are listed in the Graduate Student Handbook: <https://earthsciences.osu.edu/academics/graduate-programs/school-earth-sciences-graduate-student-handbook/earth-sciences-graduate>. We are aware of discussion about the removal of the requirement to submit GRE scores due to the documented inefficacy of using GRE scores to predict academic success and the potential barrier the test may present for some applicants. The Statement of Purpose which is used to evaluate applicants does not have specific guidelines beyond “submit a brief autobiographical statement on the online application describing your educational and professional goals and objectives.” This is extremely open to applicant interpretation, and it is not known how the Graduate Studies Committee avoids bias and subjectivity in evaluation of these statements.

Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center: for Fellowships & scholarships

For the BPCRC Postdoctoral Fellowship application, the application process and required materials are included on this webpage: <https://byrd.osu.edu/awards/byrd-fellowship>. Currently, three letters of recommendation and a letter of support from the potential Byrd advisor are required for the application.

We recommend improvements such as:

- ∅ Providing resources to our faculty and staff about the underlying gender and racial biases present in letters of recommendation (<https://eswnonline.org/guide-to-avoid-racial-bias-in-reference-letter-writing/>)
- **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?**

School of Earth Sciences: For Faculty Searches

There are no standard hiring practices or procedures across, or even within units at The Ohio State University. Thus, the hiring practices for each position may differ, and this has been the experience of those of us who have been in SES for several years. We hope to recommend improvements for the SES hiring process such as:

- ∅ **Developing a set of Standard Operating Procedures for search committees**
 - **Developing a rubric for evaluation and making the blank rubric public**
- ∅ **Publicly articulate which skills and experiences are necessary for consideration for each position**
- ∅ **Offer training opportunities to junior members of SES by including them on the search committee**

School of Earth Sciences: For Graduate Admissions

Graduate applicants to SES have historically been evaluated based on GRE scores (this requirement is being considered for removal), undergraduate and Masters transcripts, letters of recommendation, CV/resume, and a Statement of Purpose. It is not known to us whether the admissions committee uses a rubric to evaluate candidates. We hope to recommend improvements such as:

- ∅ **Developing a rubric for evaluation and making the blank rubric public**
 - **This should include evaluation of unique but relevant skills and experiences.**
- ∅ **Encouraging faculty to articulate which skills are necessary for admission into the graduate program and/or each research group**

Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center: for Fellowships & scholarships

Applicants to the BPCRC Postdoctoral Fellowship are evaluated using a rubric. We propose to improve the evaluation process by:

- ∅ **Making the blank rubric public**
- ∅ **Providing optional feedback for applicants**
- ∅ **Revising the advertisement and evaluation process**
- ∅ **Implementing strategies to avoid elite institution bias**

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

School of Earth Sciences: For Faculty Searches

In the SES hiring process, a search committee of 4-5 faculty from a variety of subfields reviews applications and decides which applicants to interview. In addition to meeting with the search committee, interviewee meets with other faculty, and students, whose input is informally considered. The search committee recommends an applicant to the Department Chair, who may accept or reject the recommendation, and who sends their recommendation to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, who makes the final decision.

To improve admissions and hiring practices, we propose implementing:

- ☒ **Group interviews to avoid biases**
- ☒ **Training opportunity for interviewers**
- ☒ **Student involvement**

School of Earth Sciences: For Graduate Admissions

In the SES graduate admissions process, a Graduate Studies Committee consisting of six members (Graduate Studies Chair, Graduate Studies Administrator, and one faculty representative from each of the four research divisions) reviews applications. It is not known to us whether the Graduate Studies Committee or the prospective faculty advisor makes the final decision for each applicant. When applicants visit during the formal visitation event, they interact primarily with their prospective faculty advisor, current graduate students, and the Graduate Studies Chair and Administrator. Communication outside of the visitation event is primarily with the applicant's prospective faculty advisor, current graduate students, and the Program Coordinator (who coordinates travel).

Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center: for Fellowships & scholarships

The selection committee consists at least of the BPCRC Administrative Manager and the BPCRC Director and rotating faculty members

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

School of Earth Sciences

SES underwent an external review in Spring of 2019, but the entire report from the external review was not shared with the entire department, and it is not known to our active Pod members whether the hiring and admissions processes were reviewed. However, one recommendation that was shared was a revision of the responsibilities delegated to graduate students, particularly in the admissions process. For several years, students have had the bulk of the responsibility of attending to recruitment booths for SES at the GSA Fall Meeting, and of organizing and facilitating prospective student visits.

- **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?**

Unknown.

- **We have also found a number of additional resources and ideas that we plan to consider/recommend to administrators**
 - **Equitable rubric:**
https://advance.washington.edu/liy/sites/default/files/uofmichigan_applicant_candidate_evaluations.pdf
 - <https://advance.washington.edu/liy/resource/31>
 - National Science Foundation’s ADVANCE program
 - rubrics and other evaluation tools that codify and define selection criteria
 - Recommended practices (as opposed to "best" practices) from Monday Interview:
 - Annual/bi-annual review of admissions routines
 - Rubric-based to make sure we pay attention to things that matter
 - Avoid GRE scores
 - Diversify selection committee
 - Get comfortable with disagreement
 - Maintain equity – don't change ratios
 - Do recruitment, mentoring, improve climate