



URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

URGE Policies for Admissions and Hiring for INSTAAR, CU Boulder

This is what was found by the GooseBarn Pod at University of Colorado/INSTAAR on Policies for Admissions and Hiring. The Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research is not a degree granting department; therefore, it does not admit students. Students join INSTAAR via their home academic department. We have included admissions processes for the departments represented in our Pod. Hiring policies described here are for the University of Colorado – Boulder.

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.

Suggested discussion questions:

- What was your experience like going through hiring and/or admissions, start to finish?
- Who is on your hiring and/or admissions committees? Who interfaces with applicants?
- Does your organization make their hiring/admissions policies public? Are they reviewed?

Pods should upload their findings and proposed changes to admissions and hiring policies to the URGE website by 4/2/2021.

CU - Geography Graduate Admissions Process/Policy: On average, GEOG receives ~130 graduate applications each year and enrolls ~15 new students. Applications are originally submitted through the CU Graduate School and screened for completeness. Candidates indicate and rank three faculty members they are interested in working with on their application. Once complete, the candidates' files are routed to the identified faculty members. Each faculty member, as well as the graduate committee, reviews those applications based on academic records, personal statements and experience, reference letters, and match with a potential advisor in the department. In 2020, the GEOG faculty voted to eliminate the GRE requirement for applicants and GRE scores are no longer considered when assessing applicants. After evaluation by the faculty and the committee, candidates are compiled into a ranked list. Offers for admission and department teaching-assistant (TA) funding are made to individuals based on the ranked list. In February and March, faculty can request funds to invite prospective students to visit the department. Discussions about housing, child care, and community support generally occur at that time. Offers are made to individuals based on the funding available from faculty, department, and CU. The department currently offers two years of guaranteed academic year support to MA students and four years of guaranteed academic support for PhD students. Support includes a tuition waiver (\$6000/semester) and a 50% appointment stipend (\$12,000/semester). In the event that a student's program takes longer than the guaranteed funding, GEOG does its best to provide continued TA funding to the student as long



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as they are making adequate progress. Summer support is provided by the advisor or by extramural funds secured by the student. One department TA-ship is typically earmarked for supporting an URM candidate. Details of the GEOG Admissions criteria and process are relatively transparent and are available for applicants on the department website:

<https://www.colorado.edu/geography/grad-program/graduate-curriculum/graduate-admissions>

In 2020, GEOG began offering admissions fee waivers to applicants who met the following criteria:

The conditions to receive the GEOG fee waiver are:

- You are not eligible for the CU Boulder Graduate School fee waiver
- You are a U.S. citizen, U.S. permanent resident, or DACA recipient
- You are applying to enroll in the following fall semester (e.g. apply in Dec. 2020 for Fall 2021)
- The application fee is a financial hardship AND/OR you have participated in under-represented minority (URM) recruitment programs AND/OR you are a first-generation college student

ENVS Inclusive Faculty Hiring Protocols ([link](#))

The Environmental Studies Program has developed and published protocols for faculty hiring based on the principle of [inclusive excellence](#). The linked webpage

The site provides guidance and practices for steps in the hiring process:

1. Developing the Hiring Proposal
2. Creating and Preparing the Hiring Committee
3. Advertising the Position
4. Evaluating Candidates
5. Conducting Interviews
6. Conducting Site Visits
7. Finalizing the Search
8. Fostering Conditions for Success

In most cases, the program has provided both specific actions and guiding philosophies or values related to each step as well as links to external resources. There is evidence of “equity checks” being built into the process (i.e., evaluating whether steps 1-3 have gathered a representatively diverse pool of candidates at the beginning of step 4). There are also links to documents including example templates for evaluating candidates, but the pages are busy and some links look more like headings at first glance. It is also only suggested that such templates might be used, such that this represents more of a commitment to removing some bias than actually demonstrating how that will be done and providing candidates with transparency on the exact criteria that will be used to evaluate their applications. The last page acknowledges the



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importance of deliberately promoting retention but requires further clarification of actual actions that will be taken beyond fairly vague statements.

While these protocols and the associated action measures represent considerable work and discussion to improve the hiring process, there remain a number of issues that could derail their effectiveness including: hiring proposals not being approved by the institution (no chance to even implement the protocols), voiced commitment and apparent adherence to protocols by hiring committee with limited options for directly identify instances of bias on an individual basis, etc.