

Hiring and Admissions Policies for the Department of Geology and Geophysics at Louisiana State University

This is what was found by the LSU G&G pod at Louisiana State University on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

FACULTY HIRING

What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement?

LSU believes diversity, equity, and inclusion enrich the educational experience of our students, faculty, and staff, and are necessary to prepare all people to thrive personally and professionally in a global society. We celebrate diversity and are committed to the principles of diversity and inclusion. We actively seek and encourage qualified applications from persons with diverse backgrounds, cultures and experiences. To learn more about how LSU is committed to diversity and inclusivity, please see LSU's [Diversity Statement](#) and [Roadmap](#). Persons needing accommodations or assistance with the accessibility of materials related to this search are encouraged to contact the Office of Human Resource Management (hr@lsu.edu).

Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available??

bring bias to the attention of others with commitment and compassion. We will hold ourselves accountable for our actions and inactions, and for maintaining intentional, measurable, and meaningful efforts to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion, including through ongoing evaluation of our policies, practices, and procedures. [LSU.edu/together](https://lsu.edu/together)

LSU Diversity Statement: We believe diversity, equity, and inclusion enrich the educational experience of our students, faculty, and staff, and are necessary to prepare all people to thrive personally and professionally in a global society. Therefore, LSU is firmly committed to an environment that affords respect to all members of our community. We will work to eliminate barriers that any members of our community experience. To make LSU a place where that can happen, we must recognize and reflect on the inglorious aspects of our history. We now acknowledge the need to confront the ways racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, classism, LGBTQ+ phobia, intolerance based on religion or on national origin, and all forms of bias and exploitation have shaped our everyday lives. We accept personal and professional responsibility to eliminate bias and oppression

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).



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

wherever they are found. We understand our obligation to speak up when we see bias whether it be in our teaching, study, or daily work. Our community will educate themselves proactively and continuously about how to intervene and

Where are advertisements posted or sent? All ads are posted internally and externally on the LSU Careers site. The Office of Academic Affairs has partnered with HRM to post all jobs on Diversity Jobs and Diverse Issues in Higher Education. Hiring managers can also request the position to be posted to additional external job boards such as general job boards, local job boards, industry job boards, and diverse job boards. I've attached our Where to Advertise guide that provides a list of general recommendations at each of these categories.

The link to the Advertising Guide, with prices, is on the HRM website:

<https://www.lsu.edu/hrm/pdfs/where-to-advertise-guide.pdf>

Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?

In most recruitment situations, this is up to the discretion of the department. It also depends if the position is considered difficult to fill and/or a quick timeline to fill. I'm familiar with departments (including faculty searches) that have advertised at conferences to gain a larger, more diverse candidate pool.

What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores³/grades?

The requirements differ by employee type. For most faculty positions, the department states that the candidate must include a CV, at least three letters of recommendation, and an official copy of transcripts. Also, I've seen departments require a research statement or teaching statement and state that it must include how diversity is built into their teaching and classroom methods.

Recently on most faculty and executive searches, LSU has tasked the candidates with providing a diversity statement that highlights the candidate's past, present, and future contributions to equity, inclusion, and diversity in their professional career.

How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric public?



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

Departments are responsible for reviewing and screening applications. Below is a statement included on the [HRM website](#) – Filling a Vacancy

Screening Candidates

The hiring decision should be based on a set of job-related selection criteria. Use the job description to identify essential functions and competency requirements and develop specific selection criteria by which applicants will be evaluated. Hiring Managers will receive applicants in their Workday inbox as they apply (civil service applicants cannot be released until the posting is closed). At that time, Hiring Managers have the option to either Move Forward or Decline the candidate in Workday.

Interviewing Applicants

Interview questions for employment should be developed by the hiring department and used consistently for all candidates interviewing for the same position. Interview questions allow candidates to demonstrate their ability to meet the established selection criteria for the position. At LSU, we encourage the usage of “behavior-based questions.” This method of questioning allows the candidates to demonstrate specific actions they took in past experiences as opposed to what action they would take in hypothetical situations. Avoid questions that could be interpreted by any applicant to be an attempt to discover protected personal information. If needed, please refer to our resources below for guidance during your interview process. Hiring departments may contact their Talent Acquisition partner for further assistance.

Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions?

Members of search committees must read and sign the following and this statement is on the LSU website.

LSU Diversity Statement

We believe diversity, equity, and inclusion enrich the educational experience of our students, faculty, and staff, and are necessary to prepare all people to thrive personally and professionally in a global society. Therefore, LSU is firmly committed to an environment that affords respect to all members of our community. We will work to eliminate barriers that any members of our community experience.

To make LSU a place where that can happen, we must recognize and reflect on the inglorious aspects of our history. We now acknowledge the need to confront the ways racism, sexism,



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

ableism, ageism, classism, LGBTQ+ phobia, intolerance based on religion or on national origin, and all forms of bias and exploitation have shaped our everyday lives.

We accept personal and professional responsibility to eliminate bias and oppression wherever they are found. We understand our obligation to speak up when we see bias whether it be in our teaching, study, or daily work. Our community will educate themselves proactively and continuously about how to intervene and bring bias to the attention of others with commitment and compassion.

We will hold ourselves accountable for our actions and inactions, and for maintaining intentional, measurable, and meaningful efforts to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion, including through ongoing evaluation of our policies, practices, and procedures.

Search committee members are usually chosen by the hiring manager. The search committee is tasked with the responsibility of recommending acceptable candidates to the hiring manager, and the hiring manager has the final decision as to who is chosen. The HRM website includes resources for the search committee [members](#) and chair [roles](#) and responsibilities.

Who interacts with the applicants?

Multiple parties usually interact with the applicant. Most certainly the hiring manager interacts with the candidate to conduct the interview. Interaction with different individuals is determined by the level of the individual. But, it is consistent with each candidate. Interaction can range from the following: HR Representative from the department/college, HRM Talent Acquisition partners, search committee members, dean (if tenured professor or direct report), those who they may supervise, and/or peers.

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

We do not think that LSU faculty hiring process has been evaluated by outside consultants. We are not sure how to change the hiring process, if changes are needed.

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”?

Opportunity Hire Program – currently being revised to gain more funding; changed program name to President’s Faculty Excellence Hiring Program



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

RECOMMENDATIONS - Hiring of faculty

We recommend that LSU-level provost/president reinstitute committing funds to faculty hires that would increase the diversity of departments and colleges. We note that in the recent past such initiatives have helped G&G make tangible steps toward gender equity.

We are currently waiting to see what large-scale recommendations will be suggested by the aforementioned President's Task Force, but will revisit recommendations for our department once it becomes clear how the university policies will change in the coming months.

Faculty Hiring Department-level --- What do we want to do differently???

Two of the most recent hires thought that the LSU G&G process was OK and neither saw the need for major changes.

At what point is diversity and inclusion considered in the faculty hiring process?

In the job advertisement.

We note that there could be filtering on part of job candidates. In other words, when candidates look at our website to find additional information, is there anything in the ad and on our website that would make the candidates think it is worth their time to apply? When candidates are asking "Is this Institution and Department a good fit for me?" what information is available on our website that conveys the message that we value diversity, equity, and inclusivity.

So, the challenge is what do we need to have in the ad and on our website? What do we need to do to better represent ourselves?

Filtering by candidates will also include an assessment of Baton Rouge, which is something we cannot change.

RECOMMENDATIONS - FACULTY HIRING DEPARTMENT LEVEL

We need OUR G&G diversity statement on our website and we need to make sure that the website shows how diverse we are. We also note that if we, as a Department, cannot write a meaningful diversity statement, then are we really ready to bring in diverse faculty? Or will they be excluded once they get here. Do we need to do more self-education? Are we truly ready?

We also discussed mentoring and retention - Are there tools available to help new faculty thrive, particularly in the midst of extra issues faced by under-represented participants. What extra barriers do people encounter? Would a "middle of the road" candidate who brings diversity be



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

interviewed? Hired? Supported? Collaborate? Respecting each other? We note that there are retention challenges in finding collaborators, navigating difficult conversations with students, harder to obtain support for research, and extra service demands. So, we ask **“Are we as a Department looking out for our colleagues? Do we advocate for them when we see them being overburdened with teaching and service commitments?”**

The G&G faculty need to have a meaningful discussion and build a statement that would be useful and intentional. Meaningful statement with actual commitments (not just boilerplate legalese). We need to have this conversation as an entire faculty, as a starting point for identifying what the barriers are. We need a “formative assessment”. Are we cool with what we are, or do we want to change?

We can't change who we are right now, but are there short term things we can do? What can we do to demonstrate that we value diversity, to prepare the environment to be a place where minoritized individuals would thrive? Would we be willing to take actions or make changes that actually *cost us* something (not money, but time, and culture, and worldview adjustment)?

Long term, what strategy are we going to take to improve diverse environments? What are our goals? How are we going to evaluate “merit vs risk”, and is our commitment to this strong enough for us to take a risk? To potentially hire a person who hasn't had the opportunity to have as high of on-paper-merit?

Pre-Script responses: are we ready with responses to common distracting objections/opinions that our colleagues may raise, to jump in and interrupt/redirect? If not, we'll miss the opportunities to do things differently and then end up with the same results. We need admissions and hiring active bystander training.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

GRADUATE ADMISSIONS

Recruiting of graduate students...

Consider incentivizing or otherwise encouraging faculty to attend scientific meetings with more diverse populations (e.g. SACNAS: <https://www.sacnas.org/>, or NABG: <https://www.nabg-us.org/>); to reach and engage with diverse pools of potential graduate students and encourage their applications. (Note that two of our regional peer institutions U of Alabama and U of Arkansas were conference exhibitors at these)

What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores³/grades?

The Department requires three letters of recommendation.

LSU requires payment of an application fee (\$50 domestic; \$70 International)

LSU Graduate School requires a GPA of above 3.0; although admission on probation is possible (GPA>2.75, in general; along with a mentoring plan).

The Department used to require the GRE, but very recently changed that requirement to a rubric that letter writers use to assess particular skills/qualities for the applicant for whom they are writing the letter.

Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed?

The application fee is likely a barrier for some applicants. The Department could pay the application fee of all applicants to its Masters and PhD, but not the ADG certificate, using Foundation (gift dollars). This is a practice that other Departments use. Removing the GRE and using the rubric was a step forward.

Are there any problematic questions asked?

The Department does not provide prompts to the letter writer for their letters. However, we probably need to review the rubric and maybe add items asking about external work loads, in addition to undergraduate research experiences.

Graduate School requirements are GPA>3.0 (undergraduate; cumulative) and transcripts from all schools attended (can be unofficial during the application process).

G&G Department requirements are three letters of recommendation AND USED to include GRE; for Fall2022, the GRE will be dropped.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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?

How do we evaluate applications? How can we shift our evaluations to better value the assets and experiences of students of color?

Well, for admitting applicants who would be supported on Research Assistantships -- this seems to be a case of "If the faculty member wants the applicant in their research group, then the admission committee says OK". For admitting applicants who would be supported on Teaching Assistantships - given the limited resources (not all faculty members "get" a TA each year), there is more of a scramble and barter system in place. The scramble-barter system does not ask about or look at the cohort as a whole. We do not seem to ask "What qualities/skills do we want our cohort of inbound graduate students to have?". Thus, the cohort reflects the individual faculty member interests.

Is there some sort of implicit-bias-ish training for people evaluating applications? Could we recommend that our grad admissions committee take such a training?

Some of these exist here: [Workshops & Trainings | LSU Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion](#). In addition, the Council of Graduate Schools has produced the Council of Graduate School Holistic Review in Graduate Admissions, which should be read by members of the Graduate Admission Committee.

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

The Department Chair appoints members of the Graduate Admission Committee each year. There is a practice of having one member retained from year to year to preserve knowledge of how admissions proceeds.

We ask the applicants to contact faculty members of interest. So, individual faculty members would be the ones who interact with the applicants; although, not all faculty members actually do this.

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

Our admission process has NOT been evaluated by outside consultants.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

The process to change our admission process would be largely be an internal process (Departmental process) in which the Admission Committee (or this Committee) recommend changes, followed by a faculty vote. There is a component of the admission process that is controlled by the Graduate School (GPA requirement) that the Department cannot change. But we have inside information that the Graduate School is piloting a new different approach to their GPA requirement. The pilot test will see if there is faculty buy-in by a few select Departments, what works, what does not work. So, the roll-out across more graduate programs will take awhile.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that our faculty at large become aware of the experiences of students of color (e.g., more likely to work multiple jobs, less likely to have been able to focus exclusively on academics, and likely to have a somewhat lower GPA).

For actionable items, we suggest:

In keeping with our recent removal of the GRE as an application requirement, **we advocate for the de-emphasis of simple metrics (e.g., GPA) in admissions and awarding of TA position decisions.**

We recommend implementing a system of holistic review of applications. We acknowledge the increase in workload entailed, and suggest this be addressed in a way that distributes the workload, possibly informed by NSF panel-style “one or two people deeply read each and then we discuss”.

We also recognize that holistic review will take additional time and might result in later offer letters, and therefore we **recommend delaying the sending of offer letters as needed to provide more time for the admissions committee to fully evaluate applications.**

Similarly, **we also recommend the expansion of the admissions committee as needed (e.g., to 5 members) to further spread the workload.**

We recommend being more explicit about what information we ask students to include in their personal statements. This may help reduce inequities introduced by varying amounts of mentoring students have received up to that point.

We recommend that our holistic review process include a rubric each reviewing faculty can refer to. This should be based on our department’s understanding of student success and the combination of qualities and skills that increase the chances of success. The rubric should also reflect our stated values in our department’s soon-to-be-meaningfully-crafted diversity



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

statement. For example, we recognize that the range of career paths taken by our current faculty does not span the set of possible paths to a successful scientific career, and we therefore cannot simply look for students with similar backgrounds and experiences to us.

We recommend that in the awarding of department TAs, demographics of the applicants be taken into serious consideration, and should be given at least equal weight with other criteria, particularly with regard to under-represented minorities. Those considerations should be informed by the current department demographics.

Overall, we recommend reviewing all “discretionary spaces” where decisions are made (both as individuals and as a committee) and establishing “equity check procedures” (formal or informal) to reduce implicit personal or systemic bias. We recognize that it is in the moments when we have discretion without accountability that we’re most likely to see inequality reproduced.