

# URGE

## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University/Organization - Example URGE Deliverable

This is what was found by MOUNTAINEERS at WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

*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) statement<sup>1</sup> is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available<sup>2</sup>?**
  - *Mandatory Statement - “WVU is an EEO/Affirmative Action Employer and welcomes applications from all qualified individuals.”*
  - *BOG Talent and Culture Rule 32: Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity - “This Rule sets forth the West Virginia University Board of Governors’ Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Policy. It is the policy of the West Virginia University Board of Governors to: Recruit, hire, train, promote, retain, tenure, and compensate persons in all applicable administrative, Classified, Faculty, Non-Classified, and Student job titles without regard to age, ethnicity, disability status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, protected veteran status, or any other class protected under the University’s non-discrimination policy (BOG Policy 44, or successor Rule), unless otherwise prohibited by applicable law.”*
- **Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**
  - *AGU, GSA, and AAG job boards, various mailing lists including field-specific mailing lists and mailing lists focused on specific underrepresented groups (although apparently not all of these posts ended up going out)*
  - *WVU Careers - careers.wvu.edu website*
  - *Informal contact with potential applicants*
- **What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores<sup>3</sup>/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?**

<sup>1</sup> R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, [blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eoo-statement-samples](http://blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eoo-statement-samples), (2017).

<sup>2</sup> <https://careers.who.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/>

<sup>3</sup> K. Cobb, #GRExit Resources, <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13215461.v1>, (2020).

<sup>4</sup> J. Posselt, Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity, and Faculty Gatekeeping, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjghw8s>, (2016).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html>

<sup>6</sup> K. Griffin, J. Bennett, T. York, Leveraging Promising Practices, Washington DC: Aspire Alliance, (2020).

# URGEO

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- *Faculty hires are based on position statements written as needed - little or no conformity between hires, years, or faculty involved. Often unclear who, when, and how the position statements are arrived at - search committee, Chair, program, etc. Must be approved by College but the Dean's input is unclear.*
- *The graduate application requirements are program specific*
  - *GRE has been dropped for both*
  - *Within Geology: students must provide a CV/resume, a personal statement, transcripts, GPA, and letters of recommendation*
    - *Geology will next year be providing guidance for personal statements on the website, and providing a template for applicants to fill in and submit. This will include specific questions for them to answer.*
- **How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric<sup>4,5</sup> public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?**
  - *No formal rubric and very little history of using rubrics.*
  - *Lack of coherent, established rubrics and hiring protocols - reinventing the wheel every time - lots of the same mistakes repeated.*
  - *Recent history of contentious, biased discussions and decision-making - little or no understanding of who makes decisions and who makes recommendations.*
  - *Variable faculty understanding of and commitment to implicit biases and their identification / mediation*
  - *Grad applicants are evaluated directly by the relevant graduate committees*
    - *Geology: The graduate committee ranks the candidates as Excellent, Good, Acceptable, and Do Not Accept. Strict rubrics are not utilized at present, although the committee is instructed to focus on faculty fit, personal statements, and letter of recommendation. Anecdotally, the relative ranking of candidates is consistent between committee members, even if some faculty are more stringent or relaxed than others.*
      - *Candidates ranked about 'Do Not Accept' are sent to prospective advisors and other advisors who may be a good fit - they provide a ranked list back to the committee for admission.*
      - *Final admission decisions are based on advisor capacity/needs and their ranked lists.*
    - *Geography: The graduate committee reviews each candidate in a shared spreadsheet, noting all aspects of the application, including: GPAs and*



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transcripts from previous institutions, test scores if submitted (GRE no longer required), letters of recommendation, with specific attention to personal statements. Each committee member (3-5 people, depending on year) makes specific comments and votes to “accept,” “discuss,” or “reject.” All in the “accept” and “discuss” categories are sent to all potential advisors for feedback. The committee then meets to discuss the applicant and feedback received and make decisions on those in the middle group. The committee then makes an initial ranking and presents it to the faculty in a Geography Program meeting. The faculty discusses and deliberates and decides on a final ranking and that is the order in which funding offers are made. Exceptional PhD candidates are also nominated for University fellowships, including some aimed at minoritized scholars, when they meet the criteria.

- TOELF/English language proficiency is required for all candidates from foreign countries.
  - If you did not complete your bachelor's degree in the US, UK, Australia, Canada, or New Zealand you must meet the minimum score requirements.
  - Aside from being flagrantly racist against non-white countries that have English as the national language, it also impacts baltoscandian countries that offer instruction in English.
  
- **Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?**
  - *Contentious.*
  - *Chair nominates or invites volunteers as they see fit and has final say on search committee. No minimum standards for diversity of gender, background, rank, etc.*
  - *A member is added from the partner program in G&G and one from another college with similar emphasis (usually Natural Resources)*
  - *Non-search committee faculty input is unclear and ad hoc. Make recommendations and may rank, but who gets a say is unclear. Makes it very easy to knock candidates down and difficult to advocate for positives.*
  
- **Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**



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- *The hiring and admissions processes have not been and are not presently evaluated by outside consultants. The hiring and admission processes has not been consistent between searches.*
- **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?**
  - *Doubtful, and if yes, only piecemeal.*
  - *History of dual-career faculty and partner hires but not consistent or by convention - budget dependent.*
  - *University ethnic diversity hiring program is rushed, competitive without understanding of the rules or rubrics, and opaque*
  - *New faculty mentoring is ad hoc and voluntary*

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

Education is essential but action is also imperative for achieving the objectives of URGE. Therefore, each topic is paired with concrete deliverables for the individual pods to develop, draft, and share. This deliverable is examining the policies for admissions and hiring at your organization and identifying any new policies to propose or current policies to change.

Hiring and admissions is the entry point to your organization. Policies and procedures at this gate will have major impacts on the people who are part of your university or company, as well as the community who interacts with you. Some of these are legal requirements and some are guidelines that organizations have more control over. Hiring policies include the text of job advertisements, where those advertisements are posted, the requirements for an application, the makeup of your hiring committees and the rubrics/procedures they follow, the interview process, strategic hiring techniques including group or cohort hires, as well as the policies of your organization regarding compensation equity. In addition to the policies for hiring, academic institutions will have admissions policies including the application process (application fees, letters of recommendation, SAT or GRE4 testing scores), an evaluation process and rubrics for applications, in-person interviews or campus visit days, as well as unwritten norms such as reaching out to an advisor via email ahead of time. Each one of these policies and procedures is an opportunity to improve the inclusivity and lower or remove barriers to your organization.

**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,



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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. We also encourage pods to post on their organization's website, and share over social media (#URGEoscience and tag @URGEoscience). Sharing deliverables will propagate ideas, foster discussion, and ensure accountability.

**1 R. E. Bernard, E. H. G. Cooperdock, No progress on diversity in 40 years. Nature Publishing Group. 11, 1–5 (2018). 2 <https://notimeforsilence.org/> 3 <https://www.change.org/p/geoscientists-call-for-a-robust-anti-racisim-plan-for-the-geosciences> 4S. H. Ledford et al., #GeoGRExit: Why Geosciences Programs Are Dropping the GRE, *Eos*, 101, 10.1029/2020EO145223 (2020)**