URGE
Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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

This is what was found by NARWaL at University of North Carolina and University of Waterloo on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement[1] is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available[2]?**
  - **University of North Carolina:**
    - "The University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer and welcomes all to apply without regard to age, color, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. We also encourage protected veterans and individuals with disabilities to apply/enroll. The Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (214 W. Cameron Ave., CB #9160, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-9160 or (919) 966-3576) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's non-discrimination policies."
  - **University of Waterloo**
    - "The University of Waterloo regards equity and diversity as an integral part of academic excellence and is committed to accessibility for all employees. As such, we encourage applications from women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, members of visible minorities, and others who may contribute to the further diversification of ideas. At Waterloo, you will have the opportunity to work across disciplines and collaborate with an international community of scholars and a diverse student body, situated in a rapidly growing community that has been termed a "hub of innovation." All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply, however Canadians and permanent residents will be given priority."

[1] R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples, (2017).

[2] https://careers.whoi.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).

- **Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**
  - Generally we reported that finding graduate school positions and postdocs was done informally via networking at conferences or with mentors at previous institutions. Several of us reported finding positions on the websites managed by individual PIs, but not at departmental or college levels. The process of determining who was looking for students and how to market ourselves to them was unclear and seems to represent a significant barrier to potential students. This barrier is likely more significant when students have no personal or professional advocates to guide them
  - However, positions (industry, government, academia and grad student/postdoc positions) are often advertised widely in forums independent of the institutions. These include social media (Twitter) and job boards/websites/listservs ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).
  - Programs like Bridge to PhD (a few examples here: [Columbia](#), [NC State and NC Central University](#), [Drexel](#)), or [AGU's Bridge program](#) could be ways to reach more applicants.
  - At UNC, there were [discussions](#) in initial departmental DEI about trying to increase recruitment at HBCUs

- **What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores[3]/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?**
  - Application procedures for UNC are outlined [here](#). GRE scores were removed as a requirement as of Fall 2021. Letters, unofficial transcripts, a personal statement, and a fee are required as well as 'community standard' questions that ask about a criminal background. The application fee can be waived if asked, or if the applicant fills out and submits a form showing financial hardship. However, this is not well-advertised and seems to be often used as a recruitment tool. It should be noted that although the linked procedures do point to a "diversity website," the website is currently broken.
  - GRE scores are not required in Canada (including Waterloo). I believe PIs will look to grades and experience for admissions. Research experience is uncommon among incoming masters students in the engineering department (the one we have relevant experience with). In this unique situation, previous experience or the lack thereof does not appear to be a larger barrier of entry. Decisions seem largely based on GPA and less-formalized criteria like personal connections or various past experiences.
  - Some universities have strict coursework prerequisites for students entering a program while others are more flexible. Requiring certain courses can ensure that students are prepared but also excludes students who may not have had access to those courses or known that they wanted to attend grad school when they were undergraduates. Our feeling was that programs that do not have specific requirements or programs that allow students to make up missing

coursework in the first year are likely more equitable, though care should be taken that additional course loads don't set some students back unfairly from the start of their programs.

- **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?**
    - Our entire group echoed a lack of transparency here. Although we have heard some secondhand descriptions of some systematic ranking of students and department-wide decisions, the means for doing so are unclear and none of us have heard of any efforts to reduce biases introduced by this process. Generally, faculty have quite a lot of autonomy about who they admit, particularly if they have funding available for a student.
    - At a previous institution, a conversation with a faculty member about hiring/application decisions suggested that removing names would be ineffective because of the requirement to have CVs in the application packages. Probably some truth here, but also somewhat defeatist.

- **Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?**
    - For faculty positions, decisions are made by a subset of departmental faculty on a selection committee. No graduate school representatives and it is unclear what the process is for selecting the committee. There are often opportunities to interact with potential faculty hires who are invited to on-campus interviews, but there is not a clear process for voicing opinions to the hiring committee.
    - For graduate school admissions, our pod reported across institutions that decisions were made almost unilaterally by PIs. Although we all reported advisors explicitly seeking feedback from their students and post-docs about potential students after meeting with them, there does not appear to be a formalized, departmental process for generating and using this feedback, leaving it largely dependent on individual PIs to "do the right thing" here.

- **Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**
    - To our knowledge there is no outside auditing of hiring or admissions at our institutions. Although at past institutions we have been aware of outside reviews, it was unclear to us (as students) whether or not hiring/admissions processes were part of the review, and if so, how.
    - There is no transparent process by which graduate students could drive changes in hiring/admissions.

- **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]?**

- ○ Generally no (with the exception of relatively common partner hires); however, there have been discussions of incorporating some of these practices. These discussions are still quite preliminary.
  - ○ An exception has been cluster hires that span multiple departments where the larger hiring committees have had stated priorities to bring in diverse clusters.

- **Hot-take solutions generated from group discussion**
  - ○ Randomized admissions: Take top 10% that are great and reject obviously bad candidates, but then randomize admission for everyone else. This method would be most effective with diverse applicant pools as it would mitigate implicit biases that creep in to ad hoc ranking criteria that often work against minoritized groups.
  - ○ Multi-dimensional applications that allow for broader exhibits of talents
    - ■ What makes someone a good scientist? How can applicants show those qualities and skills, beyond previous research experience?
    - ■ Applications could have broad sets of potential questions from which applicants could select a subset that best allows them to present themselves well. This may mitigate the strong correlations between privilege and standards like grades or particularly test scores which can be easily maximized by more privileged applicants
  - ○ Put **much more** info obviously on the website about the application process (including the availability of fee waivers and that you should reach out to a professor first before applying).
    - ■ A simple possibility could be a 3-minute "How to apply to grad school" video right on the homepage.
  - ○ More transparency on admissions process and hiring process! E.g.:
    - ■ Student (grad and undergrad) liaisons on all hiring committees. Open forum for providing feedback on candidates.
    - ■ Published ranking rubrics for admissions and/or hiring