

URGE Session 5 Deliverable

Hiring and Admissions

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

This is what was found by NAU Astronomy and Planetary Science at Northern Arizona University on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

Graduate Admissions questions were answered by a member of the department's Graduate Programming Committee ([responses in blue](#)). Faculty hiring questions were answered by the chair of the most recent faculty search committee ([responses in green](#)).

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

No EEO statement is included with our admissions advertising. (Although, as noted below, we engage in little advertising.) The Department maintains a diversity and inclusivity statement on its homepage, which is likely to be the primary avenue through which potential applicants learn about our program.

“Northern Arizona University is a committed Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution. Women, minorities, veterans and individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply. NAU is responsive to the needs of dual career couples.”

Faculty job ads are posted on the NAU HR web pages, which contain links to all the standard inclusion statements and resources:

<https://in.nau.edu/Human-Resources/Posters-Required-by-Law/>

I'm not aware of other inclusion statements or publicly available resources, but that doesn't mean they don't exist.

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

At present, advertisement is primarily through word of mouth or via individual faculty. For example, some faculty choose to advertise our program at the annual autumn DPS meeting. Other faculty may choose to email a brief advertisement to colleagues.

Faculty searches in our department typically are advertised in the AAS Job Register, AGU Job Register, PEN, and other, similar professional society listings. We also typically post our job ads on the web pages/job listings for NSBP, SACNAS, Women in Astronomy blog, AWIS, CSWA, Association for Women Geoscientists (those are the ones I have listed from our 2016/17 faculty search). Word of mouth is also very effective.

- **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?**

Applications must include a CV, a research/personal statement, a scientific writing sample, letters of recommendation, and unofficial transcripts. Notably, GRE scores have recently been removed from our list of requirements.

Requirements: “Applicants must include a CV, a statement describing teaching experience and philosophy, a statement describing research interests, a statement describing how the applicant plans to increase diversity among the students, staff, and/or faculty of the Department, an unofficial copy of their graduate transcript, and the names and contact information of three references.” Those seem very standard to me and I don’t see any obvious barriers or problematic questions.

- **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?**

Applicants are evaluated via a recently-developed rubric. The detailed rubric is not made public, but the qualifications covered by the rubric will be made public before the next application season. Demographic information is not included in the application, but names are not removed from application materials (including letters of recommendation). Thus, there is still the potential for gender- or race-based biases. Institutional biases may also be present. Also, applicants hired with a faculty member’s funding (as a GRA) – while still evaluated by the admissions committee – are largely selected based on the hiring faculty’s preferences.

Our rubric was created by the faculty search committee and approved by chair, dean, and HR. The rubric is not public. However, I can tell you – and would happily tell any candidate – that what we are evaluating is exactly what is listed in the job ad (see the example above). In other words, in this case: teaching, research, diversity.

The review committee sees the applicants’ names, but not any information about race, gender, or other protected category. However, applicants might choose to reveal such information.

I could imagine a discussion about removing candidates’ names, though I’m not sure how our HR office would consider such a request. But, our field is relatively small. This “double-blind” approach may not really anonymize the applications. The things we ask for in our application – for example, a research statement – would be really hard to anonymize, because mostly candidates are probably going to write things like “We published a super cool result in Trilling et al. 2020” and that would obviously reveal who I am.

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

Three faculty comprise the admissions committee. All applications and evaluations are made available to all faculty. All faculty are invited to engage in the interview process for applicants who are “short listed” by the admissions committee. Final decisions are made

through a general consensus of the admissions committee, the potential incoming advisor for the applicant, and other faculty working in the general research area of the applicant.

We had a faculty search committee – typically 4-5 faculty. We are required to have a committee member from outside our department, and also a “diversity” member of our committee. I’m not sure how that “diversity” member is defined – non-male? Non-white? The committee is formed by the chair (and dean), and is a different committee for each hire (i.e., not the same from one hire to the next).

The committee reads all applications and ranks them according to a matrix (rubric). Top candidates are interviewed by phone (committee and chair, separately). Reference checks carried out. Finally, a short list is identified and brought to campus. These steps are all led by committee and approved by chair, dean, and HR.

Candidates visit campus and meet with all faculty, postdocs, grad students, and undergrad students. Candidates also meet with the dean. Postdocs and students are invited to submit feedback on the candidates; this feedback is distributed within the faculty.

Final decision is made through a faculty vote.

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

I am not aware of any outside evaluations. The Graduate Program Committee is nominally in charge of the admissions process, and can implement changes. Feedback from faculty, current students, and applicants is always welcome and is considered when implementing changes. (E.g., current graduate students were asked for feedback on our admissions rubric.)

The faculty search process is very detailed and extremely formalized and scripted. HR runs this process, and they give us their detailed play-by-play. I don’t know if this process has been evaluated by outside consultants, but I’m sure it has been very well studied and crafted. However, the goal of these HR requirements is not to increase diversity or anything else that might be of value. It is rather to make sure that NAU doesn’t get sued.

- **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?**

Not for graduate admissions, at least that I am aware of.

Partner hiring does happen at NAU. Sometimes this is referred to as a “spousal accommodation.” Such requests are part of a negotiation after an offer is made, and would probably include the chair, dean, provost, etc.

Recommendation to make the graduate admissions and faculty hiring process more accessible.

- 1) Add detailed admissions criteria and guidelines to the department webpage. Make it clear and transparent what criteria are used to evaluate candidates with examples what kind of information they could choose to include in their

applications (such as having a diverse background, overcoming obstacles, a passion for research, etc.).

- 2) Require implicit bias training for anyone serving on a search committee.
- 3) Include other members of the department in the faculty hiring process
 - a) Students, staff, and postdocs all get a vote.
 - b) Graduate student representation on the search committee.
- 4) Be more explicit with graduate application writing prompts/essays.
- 5) Analyze how many and which applicants use the fee waiver process. If analysis shows fee waiver is too narrow, then expand the fee waiver process for graduate applications if shown to be too narrow.
- 6) Redefine “success” and make sure hiring/admissions rubrics reflect this definition (e.g. valuing overcoming obstacles above high grades/test scores).