

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University of Oklahoma

This is what was found by the Geosciences POD at the University of Oklahoma on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ included in a standard job or admissions advertisement.

“The University of Oklahoma, in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression, age, religion, disability, political beliefs, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices, or procedures. This includes, but is not limited to: admissions, employment, financial aid, housing, services in educational programs or activities, or health care services that the University operates or provides.”

Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?

OU statement of diversity and inclusion: *“The University of Oklahoma is committed to achieving a diverse, equitable, and inclusive university community by embracing each person’s unique contributions, background and perspectives. The University of Oklahoma recognizes that fostering an inclusive environment for all, with particular attention to the needs of historically marginalized populations, is vital to the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of our institutional mission. This enhances the OU experience for all students, faculty and staff and for the communities we engage.”*

The remainder of the document is split into two sections - Faculty and Graduate Student hiring/admissions. Proposed changes and improvements for both groups are at the end.

¹ R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eoo-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

Faculty Recruiting

The College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences (CAGS) has developed a College wide set of policies and documentation for faculty hiring using a variety of best practices that integrates the importance of JEDI throughout. It includes:

- Guidance for forming the search committee, including necessity for all members to undergo cultural competency for hiring training offered by OU.
- Template for faculty job adverts which includes JEDI components throughout (examples below)
- Template for requesting reference letters
- Template for first screening criteria and rubric
- A spreadsheet database of advertising locations, including locations that target under-represented groups
- Set of standard interview questions that address research, teaching, service, and JEDI and criteria for how to assess responses to each question.

Inclusion Text in CAGS faculty advert template:

“SoM/DGES seeks/invites/welcomes candidates for an XXX Professor/faculty position whose research, teaching and/or service has prepared them to be an integral contributor to advancement of our inclusive and diverse communities.”

“The University of Oklahoma is committed to achieving a diverse, equitable, and inclusive university community by embracing each person’s unique contributions, background, and perspectives. The University recognizes that fostering an inclusive environment for all, with particular attention to the needs of historically marginalized populations, is vital to the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of our institutional mission. This enhances the OU experience for all students, faculty and staff, and for the communities that we engage.”

“In Fall 2019, approximately 23% of OU’s freshmen were first-generation students, 33% of all students belonged to a minority race/ethnicity and 6% were international.”

“We acknowledge that the University of Oklahoma is on the traditional lands of the Caddo Nation and the Wichita & Affiliated Tribes. This land was also once part of the Muscogee Creek and Seminole nations. It also served as a hunting ground, trade exchange point, and migration route for the Apache, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, and Osage nations. Today, over 40 federally recognized, state-recognized, or self-identified tribal nations dwell in what is now the State of Oklahoma as a result of settler colonial policies designed to assimilate Indigenous peoples.”



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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

OU Faculty and Recruiting Website includes possible employment websites to post job ads, some of which focus on recruiting diverse applicants:

<https://www.ou.edu/provost/faculty-recruitment-and-hiring/recruiting-a-diverse-pool>

CAGS has created their own database of advertising locations, many of which are field specific, including locations that target under-represented groups.

In School of Geosciences, started with “traditional” academic societies and listservs but them broadened significantly to include specific groups (i.e. NABG, SACNAS, ESWN).

During normal conference time available job information is often available at School/College booths.

- **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?**

Letters of recommendation (number and time they are sought vary by unit). Challenges in the past because reference letters can be biased (well known) and do not always address the qualities and values we are looking for. CAGS now specifically ask letter writers to address the four pillars - research, teaching, service, JEDI - of each faculty application.

Other components of faculty applications - cover letter, CV, statements of research, teaching, JEDI. CAGS providing more guidelines in the job advert about what should be included in each of these to help mitigate challenges of applicants:

“Application Materials Requested: To apply, please submit a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, list of XXXX people who can serve as references (with full mailing and e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers), and brief (~2-3 pages) statements of research, teaching, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to XXXX. The research statement should summarize your prior contributions to research and your goals for developing a research program at OU. The teaching statement should summarize past instructional and mentorship experiences, your pedagogical philosophy, and plans/goals for teaching at OU (including existing and proposed courses) and advising a diverse cohort of undergraduate and graduate students. The DEI statement should



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

summarize your understanding and experience, and outline plans for contributing to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts through research, teaching, and/or service.”

- **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?**

CAGS: two sets of screening criteria (first round and second round). Criteria not public but based on job advert. Each set of criteria consider research, teaching, DEI/JEDI, and service and categorize as “qualified”, “absent”, and “uncertain”. Applicants must be qualified in all four categories to pass first screening. Rubric exists with examples of qualified, absent, and uncertain in each category for the first screening. Second screening rubric must follow same structure but contents are modified for specific searches.

SoG currently use different rubrics for different search committees. The MPGE (Petroleum Engineering) is developing rubrics to evaluate ongoing faculty search. The rubrics are not publicly available, however, it is expected the rubrics should be tied to the job advertisement. Development of job advertisements that reflect the rubrics is crucial.

The biases during faculty search can be mitigated by development of holistic evaluation rubrics (i.e., not using the 1-10 scale numbers, but fewer categories, such as exceptional, qualified, or not qualified). Removing applicant names has some potential cons, for example, the potential struggle associated with applicant may not be recognized if the names are removed.

CAGS and SoG have developed a set of standard interview questions for “in-person” interviews that address all four pillars of faculty hiring and rubrics for the responses. The questions/rubric are not currently public nor shared with applicants prior to the interview.

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

CAGS: Search committee made up of faculty at different career stages, typically an adjunct/affiliate, and a student representative (usually graduate student). Sometimes it includes an out of the department faculty member. All members must have attended a JEDI training. Faculty candidates usually interact with students, staff, and faculty during lunches, class talks, and colloquium presentations. All are encouraged to provide the search committee with feedback. The search committee makes a recommendation to the faculty and they vote. Faculty recommendations then go to the Dean, Provost etc.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

SoG: Selection committee includes several faculty from the SoG, at different career stages, one member from outside the unit (faculty, or PhD from e.g. Geological or Biological Survey), one “senior” level PhD student (non-voting member). Committee chairs must have completed hiring/DEI workshops, and members are encouraged (this should be mandated). The candidate interviews with all members of the search committee, with groups of faculty, the Director/Chair, and students (in group). The search committee deliberates, with input from faculty, students, and staff (the latter provided via Qualtrics surveys), and (ideally) develops a recommendation. That recommendation is then presented to the faculty, discussed, and voted upon.

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

Not at the unit level. Outside consultants are invited to give training for search committee. Outside consultants are sometimes used for Administrative positions (Deans) or in rare cases faculty members related to OU initiatives (e.g., Greenwood Asher for the Gateway to Belonging at OU faculty Director search). The hiring process of faculty members is overseen by college and university EEO office (developed about two years ago). Applicants are evaluated by EEO to be representative of the demographics of the applicant pool (i.e. PhDs in field). OU provides guidelines (<https://www.ou.edu/provost/faculty-recruitment-and-hiring>) and the Units develop their own procedures and are able to change them for each search.

- **Has your university 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?**

SoG and SoM have an internal mentoring program for new faculty and we also help faculty find an external mentor if they wish. SoM recently developed an expectations document for new faculty mentors and mentees.

Cluster hires do exist on campus across and within units. For example:

- DGES is currently undergoing a cluster hire effort for 4 positions
- SoG currently has a cluster hire of 3 faculty members.

Suggestions of revisioning the work culture is on the agenda.

Improving the reputation of the university (and the state) can help attract diverse candidates - this has been a particular problematic area for the University of Oklahoma in the past few years.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

Graduate Student Recruiting:

- **Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**
 - ❑ Recruiting events at American Meteorological Society, AGU career fairs, and other society conferences.
 - ❑ Individual faculty may advertise their positions through any resources they want (listserves etc.). No set guidelines for this.
 - ❑ REU program @ NWC
- **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?**

From OU Graduate College:

- Admission to a graduate program at the University of Oklahoma is based on an evaluation of an applicant's overall record, experience, personal qualifications, and proposed area of study.
- The Graduate College does not set minimum GPA requirements and encourages academic units to evaluate applications holistically, but generally, successful graduate applicants possess a 3.00 cumulative GPA over their undergraduate and/or graduate work.
- Academic programs may set more stringent admission requirements. Check with the program to which you are applying to determine any program-specific requirements.

The Graduate College does not require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or other standardized tests. However, many academic units do require the GRE or other standardized tests. For more information about required tests, applicants should contact the academic unit to which they are applying.

APPLICATION FEE: A \$50 (\$100 for international applicants) non-refundable application processing fee is required to submit your online application.?



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

SoM (from Graduate Handbook, available online):

Prospective students must formally apply for admission to the Graduate College through the Office of Admissions and Records. Applicants are required to submit three letters of reference sent to the University, official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended, a personal statement, and GRE scores.

Minimum requirements for admission to Graduate Program:

- A minimum undergraduate grade-point average of 3.0 (B average) is required, but typically students who are accepted have at least a 3.25 GPA.
- Calculus-based math course sequence including differential equations
- Calculus-based Physics classes
- The School recommends that interested students obtain an undergraduate degree in physics, mathematics, engineering, chemistry, meteorology, atmospheric science, or one of the physical sciences. We offer an undergraduate degree program for those who are interested – requirements can be found here.
- We prefer that applicants have a working knowledge of partial differential equations, although some graduate students pursue this after arriving at OU. The faculty member teaching METR 5113 – “Atmospheric Dynamics I” will review students’ transcripts and make determinations on a case-by-case basis.
- Students are required to take the GRE but there is no established minimum score. No separate GRE subject test is necessary.

*** SoM has removed the GRE requirement but online materials do not reflect this. SoM has also paid the application fee for students who have requested it, but this is not an official process or documented anywhere ***

DGES (from Grad Handbook, available online):

The required materials are as follows:

1. Statement of purpose*
2. Curriculum Vitae
3. Transcript from last degree granting institution
4. Two letters of recommendation**



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

5. Writing sample at least 2500 words (about 10 double-spaced pages) in length. This document can be a paper prepared for a class, published article, report, or other document that the applicant has had sole or primary responsibility for writing.

6. Additionally, international applicants who have not graduated from an accredited high school in an OU-approved native English speaking country (see list here) are required to provide evidence of English proficiency via one of the methods outlined here, unless they have completed at least 24 credit hours at an accredited college or university in the U.S. or another OU-approved native English speaking country (again, see list here). If admitted, international applicants will be asked to provide evidence of financial support (this can include a graduate assistantship offer from OU; for more information go here)

We strongly recommend that interested individuals communicate with DGES faculty members prior to applying (see here for an example of an appropriate initial email). In addition to academic excellence, DGES prioritizes applications that demonstrate how an applicant's interests and aims align with DGES faculty expertise and interests).

REMEMBER corresponding with faculty members often requires polite persistence because they are busy.

*Successful applicants craft a statement of purpose (aka: personal statement) that clearly demonstrates their familiarity with our graduate program. We seek students who can articulate how a specific DGES degree and graduate study under the supervision of DGES faculty member(s) will further their educational and career goals.

SoG:

The required application materials include resume, personal statement, three letters of recommendation, transcript are required. For international students, TOEFL or IELTS scores are required for English proficiency. Minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for admission. GRE is no longer required. The graduate student admission committee developed a set of prompt questions for future applications. The SoG is in the process of revising admission rubrics and participate in the AGU holistic review discussion. More information:

<https://www.ou.edu/mcee/geosciences/apply>

*** SoG new (2020) participant in the AGU Bridge Program ***



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?**

From SoM Graduate Student Handbook:

The SoM Graduate Admissions Committee (GAC) screens all graduate admission applications and ranks them into the following four categories:

1. Exceptional
2. Well Qualified
3. Conditionally Qualified
4. Not Qualified

The rankings will be obtained based on the following factors:

- i) Suitability of their academic background for success in the program (e.g., degree in atmospheric sciences, earth sciences, physics, engineering, mathematics or related disciplines),
- ii) Academic record including overall GPA, GPA in their major and their grades in core classes critical to success in our program (e.g., dynamic and physical meteorology, math series from calculus to partial differential equations, physics, engineering classes, etc.),
- iii) reference letters,
- iv) GRE scores,
- v) other factors indicating success including publications, research, awards or employment experience, and
- vi) TOEFL for foreign students.

The composite GAC rankings will be provided to the faculty for review and will be utilized in the following manner:

- Students ranked as Not Qualified will receive early notices of their application not being accepted by the School.
- Recruiting efforts such as invitation to visiting student weekend and personal contact by the GAC and the School's staff will focus on those students in the top two categories.
- TA offers will be made based on merit, beginning with the Exceptional and strongest Well Qualified students who have research interests that match those of our faculty.
- Offers of GRAs will normally be made to those students that are Exceptional or Well Qualified. Offers may be made to Conditionally-Qualified students upon GAC approval of an exception



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

(e.g., the faculty member has been turned down by higher ranked students and is unable to find a student with interests in their general research area)

SoG:

Ranks nominated students based on rubrics on a numerical scale. Borderline students will be discussed within the committee. Committee decisions and recommendations will be discussed with the nominating faculty member. The student admission rubrics are not public.

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

The OU Graduate College expects each department to designate a Graduate Admissions Officer (GAO) who has the authority and responsibility for all admissions decisions.

SoM:

The SoM has decided that its Graduate Liaison will also serve as GAO. The SoM expects that, normally, the GAO will consult with the SoM Graduate Admissions Committee (GAC) before making admissions decisions. The GAC is formed each academic year at the first meeting of the SoM Graduate Studies Committee (GSC). The GAC is responsible for the evaluation of graduate admission applications and communication with the applicants regarding the status of their applications. The GAC is chaired by the GAO and consists of at least two regular SOM faculty members elected by the GSC. The staff person handling graduate admissions, normally the Academic Coordinator for Graduate Programs, serves as a staff representative on the committee. The Adjunct/Affiliate member of the GSC will be invited to serve as a non-voting Adjunct/Affiliate Representative on the GAC

Hold a visiting student weekend (typically in February) for selected students (typically those ranked as exceptional). During this visit prospective students interact with each other, current students, faculty, and staff in formal and informal situations.

DGES

The DGES graduate committee (chaired by the Director of Graduate Study) oversees the review of applications. Any DGES faculty member can access applications and share feedback with graduate committee members regarding which applicants should be admitted to the program and considered for funding. The graduate committee recommendations regarding admittance and funding are discussed and voted upon during a DGES faculty meeting.

URGEO

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

SoG:

The School of Geosciences has eight faculty members on the admission committee for graduate students, and a student advisor. The potential faculty advisor will nominate student applicants. The nominees will be evaluated by the graduate admission committee. The committee will evaluate and rank the applicants, and make recommendations whether the nominees are admitted or declined. The committee's recommendation will be forwarded to the nominating faculty member, and the faculty member will make the ultimate decision whether or not to admit the student. The faculty member who nominated the applicant will interact with the applicant.

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

The student admission process is not evaluated by outside consultants. However, the SoG is currently participating in the AGU Bridge program, and has participated in a few workshops for admission.

- **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 students.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

Open Issues and Proposed Changes

- More transparency about the evaluation process and sharing rubrics - at least the areas that are being evaluated.
- No dual-career program at OU.
- Lack of consistency in faculty and graduate student admissions in different units.

Faculty Specific:

- Interviews - how? Who with? Lessen service load of interviewers so they have time to conduct extra interviews? Shorter video interviews with more candidates before bringing them to campus.
- Need to complete an assessment of which listserves/websites etc. are most effective at recruiting diverse applicants.
- Should the set of standard interview questions be shared with faculty in advance. If so, how long in advance?

Graduate Specific:

- How can we work on "cohort" grad student recruiting across units. For example, connecting prospective students from different departments in the broader geosciences at OU? This may be especially helpful for students from under-represented groups.
- Need to develop guidance for writing graduate student personal statements and make that publicly available. This could be in terms of specific questions rather than generic personal statements, and/or writing prompts.
- Host webinar each year for "how to apply to our graduate school" at the unit level to share such information. Specifically advertise this to MSIs.
- More active recruitment with NWC REU students by the Graduate Admissions Chairs from all geoscience departments.
- Develop "better" metrics for evaluating prospective students, such as what can/do students contribute to a program. Utilize a rubric.
- Reevaluating GPA thresholds and class prerequisites for admissions.
- Requesting reference letters for grad students that ask for information that we want/need.
- The cost of official transcripts can be a barrier for admission (cost varies at different schools, especially challenging for those who have transferred multiple times). Can the need for official transcripts be delayed?
- Equity checks - knowing the composition of the applicant pool and ensuring this is maintained through the selection process.
- Consistent and advertised method for paying/waiving admission fees