

# URGEO

## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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### Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

This is what was found by The Panther Pod at University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

The following was approved by all present on 04/07/2021. (*Not present*: Mikayla Walker)

- **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>?**
  - [UWM Equal Employment Opportunity Policy](#) (public)
  - Statement in last Geosci faculty recruitment ad (2018): “The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.”
    - *Consider expanding this into a more welcoming statement.*
  - Statement in last Geosci grad student recruitment ad (2020): “UWM and the Department of Geosciences are committed to equity, diversity, and equal opportunity. We strongly encourage applications from underrepresented minority students, persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ community, nontraditional students, and other underrepresented and disadvantaged groups in geosciences. You are welcome here.”
  
- **Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**
  - Last faculty hire (2018)
    - EOS - Print and Online
    - GSA - Print and Online
    - Association of Environmental Engineering & Science Professors (AEESP) - Online
    - Association of Women Geoscientists (AWG) – Online
    - National Association of Black Geoscientists
    - Also distributed to various disciplinary listservs
  - Last grad student recruitment effort
    - AGU – online
    - GSA – online
    - Association of Environmental Engineering & Science Professors
    - Various disciplinary listservs

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

<sup>2</sup> <https://careers.whoj.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).

- Have purchased grad student recruitment booth at GSA in the past
- Individual faculty reach out to colleagues at other institutions
- Department website
  - Many potential applicants use the department website as a source of information. It would be useful to know what they are looking for and think about redesign. For example, many faculty web pages are not up to date- and probably don't give the information students are seeking. Recommend soliciting input from new graduate students about what information is most needed and modify.
- *Consider implementing uniform, department-wide approach in how faculty respond to graduate applicant inquires. (To avoid biases in how individuals respond – or don't respond – to 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?**
  - Faculty Applications
    - Cover letter
    - CV
    - Research statement
    - Teaching statement
    - Letters of recommendation
    - *Consider adding DEI statement*
  - Graduate Applications
    - Personal statement
      - *Consider rewriting our prompt so that we get more relevant information from the student*
    - Transcripts/grades
    - Letters of recommendation
      - *Consider making sure faculty are aware of research documenting biases in letters written for women and URM students (also applies for faculty hires)*
      - *Consider providing faculty guidance on writing letters of recommendation for our own students: provide information on best practices and biased language, peer review letters?*
    - Fee (\$75) – can be waived by participation in Graduate School Open House (1 time per year)
      - *Can we consider a department fund to support fee waivers?*
- **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?**

- Faculty/Staff:
  - Weighted rubric is used at early stage
  - Names not currently removed and this would probably be challenging in faculty applications
  - Faculty evaluated on publications (number and quality), grants, active in the scientific community (talks at conferences etc.), research and teaching experience fit with department needs
- Graduate Applications:
  - Names not removed. Might be challenging as many students refer to published work and/or have e-mail exchanges with faculty (and this is encouraged).
  - A holistic approach is used, but it is not systematic or currently rubric-based. We usually look for academic achievement reflected in high grades in Geosci and related coursework (A-B); sufficient coursework to prepare them for their chosen field; some research experience; positive letters of recommendation. Also consider how their research interests fit within the department. Diversity and equity actively considered when we have that information for a candidate.
    - *Recommend shift to using a rubric.* Would also suggest making some form of the rubric available to applicants.
    - *Consider:* Many URM students may be less likely to have research experience (for a wide variety of reasons). Is there another way to evaluate them in terms of research potential?
  - A small department with a (relatively) small applicant pool means candidates can't be simply ranked
  - Selection considers overall candidate strength, but is often strongly weighted towards who has openings in their lab (e.g., strong applicant in structure will not be admitted if structure faculty cannot accommodate more students)
  - GRE requirement has been permanently removed
  - Many international students experience TOEFL/language exams as a logistical and/or financial barrier.
- **Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?**
  - **Staff hires:** committee usually includes Chair, at least one existing staff that would most interact with the hire, and 1-2 additional faculty. Applicants usually only interact with this committee.
  - **Faculty hires:**
    - Preliminary screening committee usually consists of 3 faculty, including those most closely aligned by discipline with the position.
    - Committee makes recommendations on who to advance in the process, but entire faculty has access to all applications and votes.

- Applicants interact with entire faculty, staff, and many students (UG and G)
  - Faculty decide on final hire – usually by consensus, but not always. Academic staff opinions given consideration or allowed to vote, depending on the position.
- **Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**
  - No ?
  - Faculty hiring: With the exception of some procedures required by HR, it would only take an agreement by faculty to change.
  - Grad admissions: Most changes can be implemented with a faculty vote. Some changes to the application may require approval by the Graduate School and/or the UWM Graduate Curriculum Committee.
- **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”<sup>6</sup>?**
  - We hire so few faculty that a cohort hire is unlikely. There have been “cluster hires” around certain disciplinary initiatives in the past, but that is dependent on Chancellor, Provost, Dean priorities and budget. We are unlikely to have any faculty hires, let alone cluster hires in the foreseeable future.
  - Mentoring for faculty: Program exists through the Provost’s office <https://uwm.edu/faculty-mentor/>
  - Mentoring for undergraduate and graduate students: starting a career-focused mentoring program with LET’S GEO program, pairing students with professional geoscientists. May want to consider a near-peer mentoring program where more advanced students mentor students entering the program.
  - Dual career support and partner hires for faculty: these have been offered in the past on a case-by-case basis through the College. These have been officially discontinued, but other departments have pushed for and received them. All of these decisions are made above the departmental level.

**Action items:**

- Overhaul graduate recruitment and admissions procedures to include more practices conducive to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Grad Advisor take lead and consult with department DEI committee and Graduate School Diversity and Inclusion officers. Target timeline: ready for use in Fall 2022 admissions?
  - Consider development of rubric for admissions decisions
  - For application, consider development of more guidance on Personal Statement or replace with targeted questions
  - Consider procedure/ template for all faculty to respond to interested applicants at first contact

- Redesign website as needed based on feedback from current grad students
- Provide information and assistance with graduate school application process to UWM undergraduates (could be rolled into LET'S GEO career-readiness program):
  - Provide yearly (or twice-yearly) sessions for our undergrads (and maybe anyone interested if we offer online session?) on what grad school is and how it may help career trajectory; how to pay for it (or not pay for it!); how to apply: who to contact, when to contact, what to do to be a strong candidate
  - Provide assistance with personal statement writing