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Admissions and Hiring Policies for the School of Earth and Space Exploration at Arizona State University

This is what was found by the ASU SESE pod at Arizona State University on Hiring and/or Admissions policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

Graduate Admissions

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]?

- No such statement is listed on the SESE or ASU Graduate Admissions webpage, but the following statement is included on SESE's Inclusive Community page:

    Equity and inclusion are core values of the School of Earth and Space Exploration. We define our success not by whom we exclude, but by whom we include and how they succeed, advancing research and discovery of public value in the Earth and space science and broadening access to quality science and engineering education.

Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for admissions?

- SESE recruits via exhibitor booths at major scientific conferences as well as annual meetings of the National Association of Black Geoscientists and, beginning in 2020, the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science.
- Individual faculty with available funding to support new graduate students may advertise specific opportunities via their own networks

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?

- To be eligible for admission into any graduate program at ASU, applicants must have a bachelor's degree, have at least a 3.0 GPA, and demonstrate English proficiency via the TOEFL, IELTS, or PTE (minimum scores are determined by ASU Graduate Admissions and students must receive a higher score to qualify for a TA assignment).

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[1] R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, https://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).

- ○ SESE does not require a minimum GPA for admission, but the ASU requirement may discourage some students from applying.
- ASU requires an application fee of $115 for international students on any non-immigrant visa type studying in the U.S. and a fee of $70 for all other students.
  - ○ For the 2021 admissions cycle, SESE provided an application fee waiver to anyone who requested it. The SESE Directorate is currently working to allocate departmental funding to make the fee waiver a permanent offering. Information about the fee waiver is not currently on the SESE website.
- Additional application components include a standard ASU Graduate Admissions application, a statement of purpose, three letters of recommendation, official transcripts and an Academic Record Form to highlight coursework relevant to their intended degree, and curriculum vitae (which is optional but encouraged).
  - ○ SESE additionally asks students to report three prospective faculty advisors, whether they have spoken to the advisors about research opportunities, other graduate programs or graduate fellowships they are applying to, and whether the applicant had undergraduate research experience.
  - ○ The Associate Director (AD) of Graduate Initiatives at SESE is considering transitioning from a general statement of purpose to a set of well-defined essay prompts to ensure that applicants provide specific information desired by the admissions committee.
- SESE removed the GRE requirement from its application in 2019. Moreover, there is no field in the application to even report GRE scores, which prevents reviewers from unconsciously privileging applicants who choose to report high GRE scores.
- While not a requirement for admissions, the SESE Graduate Admissions webpage explicitly states, "Prior to the application deadline, applicants are strongly encouraged to contact potential faculty advisors to discuss research interests and to explore research opportunities. Networking at an early stage can strongly enhance admissions decisions."
  - ○ Explicitly listing the recommendation on the website helps dispel the hidden curriculum. However, as mentioned in this week's video, it is possible that implicit bias may affect faculty responses to student emails, especially if the students do not have experience writing such emails. The UC Davis Earth and Planetary Sciences program provides an email template for students to use.

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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?

For the 2021 admissions cycle, SESE implemented a standardized rubric (modified from a rubric initially developed by the UC Davis Earth and Planetary Sciences program) to ensure that all graduate applications received a holistic review. The rubric is available to department members but not to applicants. The Associate Director (AD) of Graduate Initiatives strategically distributed the ~450 applications among all tenured/tenure-track faculty. Each faculty member received approximately seven applications to review, though some faculty members committed to reviewing any application that mentioned them as a potential advisor (e.g., one professor reviewed ~50 applications). Applicant names and demographic information reported by the student were not removed from the applications. The faculty members evaluated the applicant according to the rubric and then reported to the AD: 1) who they recommend for admission, 2) how many files they reviewed in total, and 3) the justification for recommending the applicant(s).

The admissions committee then reviewed applicants recommended by faculty members. If an applicant received three reviews from the committee that agreed that they were a strong candidate for admission, they were added to the short list.

SESE does not admit students without guaranteed funding during the academic year and the graduate funding model relies on RA lines from faculty grants. In consequence, some faculty may not be able to admit students that they want to work with if they do not have enough funding. An applicant must be approved by the faculty PI that commits to funding them in order to be admitted. Some members of the URGE pod expressed concern that this funding model exacerbates graduate student reliance on a single faculty member.

Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?
- The Associate Director of Graduate Initiatives ultimately reserves the right to make final admissions decisions and then reports the admitted applicants to the ASU Graduate College, who, in practice, do not contest unit decisions.
- According to the SESE Bylaws (5.2.1), the Graduate Recruiting Committee consists of three elected members of the voting faculty. The senior elected member and/or Associate Director of Graduate Initiatives serves as Chairperson of the Committee.

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[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

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Members are elected each spring on a staggered basis, with each elected member serving a three-year term.

- Faculty are nominated to serve on various committees depending on the expertise desired for the particular search, with care to ensure diversity in faculty gender and rank. If there is more than one person nominated, the faculty will elect them via a (now anonymous and online) vote. Junior faculty members are only allowed to serve on one committee and generally do not serve on committees that entail a significant amount of work, including graduate admissions.
- Applicants are encouraged to contact faculty they are interested in working with in advance of applying for admission. In addition to potential mentors, applicants interact with the Associate Director of Graduate Initiatives and administrative staff members during the admissions process.

Has your admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?

- The admissions process was last evaluated during the department's heptennial review in 2018.
- The Associate Director of Graduate Initiatives is able to implement changes to the graduate admissions process, though requirements listed in the SESE Bylaws (e.g., the number and/or composition of faculty on the Graduate Recruitment Committee) can only be amended/changed via faculty vote (⅔ majority).

Hiring Practices

What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available[6]?

- According to ASU's Faculty and Academic Professional Recruitment handbook and the 2020 Diversity and Recruitment Training (Slide 37), the following statement must be included in all advertisements and openings:

  Arizona State University is a VEVRAA Federal Contractor and an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will be considered without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, protected veteran

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[6] https://careers.whoi.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/

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status, or any other basis protected by law.

- Advertisements must link to ASU's full non-discrimination statement (ACD 401) at https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd401.html, and also a link to the Title IX policy at https://www.asu.edu/titleIX.

Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring, e.g. job fairs, showcases?
- SESE has made a concerted effort to increase the diversity of listservs/job boards where advertisements are posted, including Diverse Jobs, disciplinary/professional association job boards, SACNAS, Earth Sciences Women's Network, scientists with disabilities, etc.

- The hiring unit must draft a Faculty and Academic Search Plan (FAP-SP) to document the essential functions for every position for which a search is conducted. It also details the recruitment strategies (including the ad to be used in external recruitment efforts) to be used to ensure a qualified, diverse, and inclusive applicant pool. The FAP-SP must be submitted to the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for assignment of a job order number and posting to the ASU employment website. The job ad must be submitted to the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and posted on ASU page before it can be posted on other sites, not for approval, but to ensure compliance with a federal regulation that requires government contractors to advertise internally to allow for promotional opportunities. (2020 Diversity and Recruitment Training: Slide 24, 30)

What are the requirements for an applicant? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?
- The requirements listed in the job ads are individually crafted for each position and can vary dramatically between different ads. Considering the general maxim that there is no "one size fits all" solution for equity problems, we probably need to add an additional step to each process to review the questions/requirements.
- Letters of recommendation are only requested once a candidate has made the long list to minimize burden for applicants.

How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?
- The search committee evaluates the applicants using a rubric (the rubric is not publicly available) to create a long list of applicants who are requested to provide letters of recommendation. The committee then creates a short list of applicants to interview/invite

for campus visits. For postdocs and research staff, the search committee can decide directly who to hire. For faculty positions, there is more of a consensus approach. Following the candidate visits, the search committee collects feedback from the department on each applicant, which they summarize during a faculty meeting. The faculty then holds a vote, though this vote is neither final nor binding. The search committee then gives their recommendation to the director, who makes the final decision and presents it to the dean for approval.

- All faculty members who serve on search/hiring committees must complete an implicit bias/diversity and recruitment training course prior to evaluating applicants.
- Each applicant is encouraged to fill out an Equal Employment Opportunity survey to provide ethnicity, gender, and veteran status information for the applicant pool. This is the only place this information is gathered, and it must be kept separate from other application materials. (2020 Diversity and Recruitment Training: Slide 45)
- The hiring unit must prepare an Applicant List that documents the names and demographic data of all applicants for a Faculty or Academic Professional position, along with the reasons that an applicant was interviewed (or not interviewed) and hired (or not hired). The Applicant List must be submitted to the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within 30 days of the hire(s) being made or the close of the search. The data is reported annually as part of the ASU Affirmative Action Plan (2020 Diversity and Recruitment Training: Slide 43), but it is unclear whether the department uses such lists to identify potential disparities in evaluation and hiring practices.

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

- According to the ASU Academic Affairs Manual (ACD 111-01), half of the faculty members that serve on search/hiring committees must be appointed by the department director, and the other half are elected by departmental faculty. To elect the latter, SESE faculty are nominated to serve on hiring committees depending on the expertise desired for the particular search, with care to ensure diversity in faculty gender and rank. If there is more than one person nominated, the faculty will elect them via a (now anonymous and online) vote. Junior faculty members are only allowed to serve on one committee per year and generally do not serve on committees that entail a significant amount of work.
- The search committee presents a concrete recommendation to the director. The director makes the final decision (subject to the dean's/provost's approval).
- Before and during the campus interviews, the chair of the search committee is the primary contact with the applicants. During negotiations over the offer, the director becomes the primary contact because they have negotiating authority in consultation with the dean and/or provost.

Has your hiring process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?
- Hiring processes were last evaluated during the department's heptennial review in 2018.
- The search committee chair has some discretion over the hiring process, but must abide by the policies and procedures of the SESE Bylaws, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, ASU, and/or the Arizona Board of Regents.

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"[7]?
- Targeted cluster hire in progress to increase faculty diversity and interdisciplinarity
- ASU generally good about approving partner hires?
- SESE's Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Task Force is currently drafting a strategic plan for the department that prioritizes mentorship (mentorship program for mid-career faculty?) and re-envisioning departmental culture

Hiring Postdoctoral Researchers

Unlike the process described above, the process for hiring postdoctoral researchers is much more individualized and unstructured. With the exception of the SESE Exploration Fellowship, which has a standardized application, most postdoctoral researchers are hired by individual PIs (tenured/tenure-track faculty members and research scientists) awarded external funding. The PI determines the salary (subject to some minimums), terms and conditions of appointment, and duties of the postdoctoral researcher (ACD 503-03, ABOR 6-310). These positions are often communicated by word of mouth, but if the position is advertised, the PIs may work with HR to develop the job ad, though there have been some difficulties with such ads in the past. For example, Chinese citizens may not receive NASA funding, but ASU is resistant to exclusionary language in job advertisements. As a result, when Chinese citizens applied for the position, the PI had to decline them immediately.

To hire a postdoctoral researcher, ASU requires at least two faculty members to constitute a committee. According to the experiences of our pod members, postdoc hiring committees tend to be very informal and usually only include the PI hiring the postdoc and whoever they can bribe/cajole into helping. Non-tenured faculty may serve on postdoc hiring committees. It is unclear whether a committee is always formed for positions that are not advertised. The SESE

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[7] K. Griffin, J. Bennett, T. York, Leveraging Promising Practices, Washington DC: Aspire Alliance, (2020).

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Exploration Fellowship does have a formal evaluation committee. Our URGE pod members believe that implementing a formal hiring process that uses evaluation rubrics for all postdoc hires would be a significant improvement over the current system.