

Hiring and Admissions

This is what was found by the SEA URGE Pod at Sea Education Association on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

For this deliverable, we audited hiring and admission practices for four major groups (Faculty, Staff, Crew, and Students) within SEA, since these groups have different pathways into the organization. We also recognize the need to consider practices for the Board of Trustees and Overseers and Vendors.

1. What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?

Included in all job postings since 2018:

“SEA is an EOE committed to the development of a multicultural environment. We value input of multiple viewpoints and perspectives across the organization; our goal is to create an academic and working community that is rich with cultural, social and intellectual diversity.”

The link to the [Diversity & Inclusion at SEA](#) webpage is visible on SEA’s Employment Opportunities webpage. This link was not found on SEA’s How to Apply to SEA Semester webpage (for student admissions).

The EOE statement and link to diversity & inclusion statement are not listed on the crew employment pages (public) or crew portal (internal). The public pages are: https://www.sea.edu/ships_crew/deck_crew_employment
https://www.sea.edu/ships_crew/assistant_scientist_employment

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

a. Faculty

- i. Advertisements are posted** on SEA’s website, general job search websites, Chronicle of Higher Ed, Inside Higher Ed, and oceanography listservs and journals. Faculty position postings are sent to alumni of the Woods Hole Partnership Education Program (PEP; a JEDI science mentorship program for students from diverse backgrounds, many attending HBCUs). The SEA community (including Overseers, current faculty and staff) are asked for recommendations and may advertise the position by word of mouth. SEA tries to

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

target diverse groups in advertising positions by posting advertisements to SACNAS and other inclusive societies. Contract faculty are usually recent alumni, assistant scientists, or others with personal connections to SEA who hear about positions through word of mouth.

- ii. **Other strategies include** Advertise to other Woods Hole scientific institutions, particularly to postdoc communities (e.g., post job ad on their listservs). Research and use other inclusive, diverse community job announcement services.

b. Staff

- i. **Advertisements are posted...** Depending on the position, HR advertises in local newspapers online, but most of our positions need a more specific, targeted audience. We advertise on a long list of general sites and diversity sites, as well as many job specific sites directed at education, teaching, marine, admissions, development, etc. (however, some sites can be cost prohibitive). We advertise our openings to alumni through social media. We post openings on the SEA website and post paper announcements on campus bulletin boards. We encourage all staff to send postings to their associates and to post on social media. HR sends job openings to local marine scientific institutions such as the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Marine Biological Laboratory, etc. (to their HR and also to specific people). The President also sends the openings to local contacts or local groups she thinks are applicable, including trustees and overseers. HR sends the postings to alumni of the PEP program, who may be able to reach a more diverse audience than the outlets above.
- ii. **Other strategies include...** Research and use other inclusive, diverse community job announcement services.

c. Crew

- i. **Advertisements are posted** on SEA's website, Tall Ships America Billet Bank, Marlinspike Magazine, Sea History Magazine, and social media sites (primarily by the SEA Port Captain and Marine Department). Crew positions also are advertised via word of mouth to Maritime Academies, Marine Operations Offices (research, sail, yacht, cruise), and through the alumni network. Alumni may start an employment relationship through unpaid onboard internships (as deck/lab hands).
- ii. **Other strategies include...**making shipboard internships more accessible to others by providing compensation/stipend.

d. Student

- i. **Advertisements:** SEA Semester is advertised at study abroad fairs (viewbook, applications, and related materials are handed out there and elsewhere). Advertisements are sent to study abroad offices. Our Dean of Academic Partnerships reaches out to faculty at select institutions. Alumni host sessions at study abroad and other recruitment fairs, sometimes stepping in for admissions counselors who are unable to attend. Digitally, we advertise through our website and application process therein. SEA hosts informational webinars with prospective students. Admissions may connect prospective students to SEA

alums at their institution. Email “push” campaigns have been used for prospective students, but have largely been replaced with social media outreach followed by text messaging. We post advertisements for SEA programs on social media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook) and have purchased ads on these platforms.

- ii. **Other strategies include** sending job ads to HBCUs and schools with diverse student bodies as well as other DEI channels and associations (e.g., Society of Black Engineers, MISS, etc.).

3. What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g., letters of recommendation, 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?

We are not aware of any problematic questions asked during the hiring or admissions processes. However, not everyone interacting with candidates has received training in having culturally-sensitive conversations, thus problematic questions may arise.

a. Faculty

i. Requirements:

- **Full-time:** application (includes resume, cover letter, Teaching Statement, 3 letters of recommendation, no fee); phone interview; video interview with search committee; in-person interview/campus visit that includes giving a presentation to current faculty, staff, and students. Some candidates also join a portion of a SEA Semester cruise as part of the interview process. SEA covers travel expenses including airfare, one night hotel, bus fare, taxi, tolls, and mileage for a visit to campus, and travel expenses to/from the ship, but not salary compensation for time.
- **Nautical Science/Captains:** interview; time on ship; temporary roles can transition into full-time captain roles.
- **Contract Faculty:** are drawn from 1) a pool of former full-time faculty, 2) a candidate that was considered for a full-time position but was not offered the position, 3) candidates who have a longstanding relationship with SEA. Thus, most contract faculty have been through the application process at some point, but there is no standard selection process.

- ii. **Potential Barriers:** search committee doesn’t have any formal training in hiring practices; unpaid time for a campus visit or time at sea can be challenging for candidates to justify to current employers; hiring from within the SEA community (particularly for contract faculty) creates a closed loop that may exclude other qualified candidates including BIPOC.

- iii. **Problematic Questions:** A statement that salary or benefits package is “competitive,” is often included in job announcements, but this is a subjective claim that deserves research. Lack of transparency in salary and very low salary offerings can be a barrier.

b. Staff

- The request for a Personal Statement in response to a broad question may pose a barrier for students, while a series of short-answer questions could allow SEA to better assess a student's fit for the program.

iii. **Problematic Questions:** We should ensure admissions counselors receive training to avoid problematic, culturally-insensitive questions.

4. 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 each of the following groups, there has been very little to no training for people serving or chairing search committees. This may introduce barriers, problematic questions being asked, and biases to the hiring and admission processes.

a. Faculty

i. **Process:** The search committee is assembled by the Academic Dean and the chair of the faculty search committee, who is a faculty member in the discipline with a vacancy serves as chair. The committee includes: a faculty member from each discipline; the HR manager; a Marine Department representative, if hiring a captain; the science coordinator, if hiring a scientist. Frequently, the committee includes alternates to stand in for faculty going to sea during the hiring process. There is not an HR vetting process. All committee members are given online access to all applications. We meet as a committee after everyone has a chance to look over the applications, and then the vetting process begins. There are standard sets of interview questions for all searches, to keep the interview as fair to all as possible. After individual assessment of candidates, the committee meets and trims list to ~5 applicants. These applicants are invited to a video interview with the committee. Then, 2-3 candidates are invited to visit the campus for an in-person interview and to join a portion of a SEA Semester cruise at sea. Evaluations are collected from current faculty and staff as well as students who interacted with the candidate. The search committee makes a recommendation to the Academic Dean, who then makes a final decision with input from the SEA President. This process is not public.

ii. **Introduced Biases and Strategies to Address Them**

Students, staff, and faculty provide feedback on the candidate's guest lecture, which is part of the on-campus interview for oceanography and maritime studies candidates, by answering a few broad questions that may be subject to unconscious or conscious bias. One strategy to address this is to design a lecture-feedback questionnaire with specific questions (perhaps with a rubric), and to solicit a larger and broader audience for each guest lecture. One interview question for candidates should be: what is your ability to work in dynamic situations that require fast decision making? We could add questions that ask the candidate to describe a response to specific scenarios SEA employees have experienced. Ways to minimize bias in hiring include: "decision aids, including tests, structured interviews, and a combination of mechanical predictors, [to]

substantially reduce error in predicting employee performance.” (Bohnet, 2016, *Harvard Business Review*)

b. Staff

- i. **Process:** Committee needs differ depending on the position. There is typically an initial phone interview by HR or the Search Committee Chair for candidates for all positions. The next step is usually a video call with the entire search committee. At times this step was skipped for a position drawing only local candidates. The third step for top 3-5 candidates for all positions is a campus visit. During the campus visit the events vary with position ranging from individual and group sessions with the search team, supervisor, department colleagues and others as appropriate for the position. In the case of faculty and some SMG there is often a presentation to a larger group, informal discussion over lunch with SMG or others. For SMG there are usually interviews and/or meetings with appropriate trustee representatives. Also, depending on the position, the candidates meet with potential peers and/or potential subordinates, whose opinions are also factored in. The full committee typically reviews all candidate applications.
- ii. **Introduced Biases and Strategies to Address Them:** To avoid bias, remove names from all applications before the committee considers candidates.

c. Crew

- i. **Process:** The application is reviewed by the appropriate Marine Department member. There is an option of phone, video, or in-person interview. Calls to references are heavily weighted in evaluating candidates. There is no rubric or public evaluation process.
- ii. **Introduced Biases and Strategies to Address Them:** There is no clear way to remove names from application. Even if we provided applications to the Marine Department without names, candidates often come from a pool of current employees and alumni who have experienced SEA programs and want to participate further. We could research other ways to invite BIPOC candidates into tall ship sailing and oceanography.

d. Student

- i. **Process:** An admissions counselor conducts the interview, approves the application packet, and sends to faculty. Two faculty members review every approved application and provide a score (1-5) for each component of the application packet. They use this to provide a recommendation on whether a student should be admitted. The Dean of Admissions reviews the forms and follows recommendations, which may include additional conversations with faculty. We do not require any test scores.
- ii. **Introduced Biases and Strategies to Address Them...** SEA could remove applicant names from files to avoid bias. Standard, detailed interview questions could be designed to avoid implicit (or explicit) bias by admissions counselors.

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

- a. Faculty:** The selection committee is made up of one or more members of each faculty discipline, HR, and one or more associate deans. The Academic Dean makes the final decision and recommendation to the SEA President. The Academic Dean, search committee Chair, and HR serve as the main points of contact for candidates. Candidates interact with SEA faculty, staff, crew, and students throughout the hiring process. Candidates give a guest lecture on campus, and faculty, staff, and students fill out evaluation forms.
- b. Staff:** HR is the main point of contact for applicants. Committee needs differ depending on the position, and candidates meet with potential peers and/or potential subordinates, whose opinions are factored in. The committee recommends a final candidate to the relevant department head, or in the case of a candidate for the Senior Management Group, the recommendation is made to the President. Candidates may interact with SEA faculty and staff when they interview on campus.
- c. Crew:** The individual member of the Marine Department with oversight on a specific area makes the final hiring decisions (i.e., Port Captain hires the mates and engineers, Science Coordinator hires assistant scientists, etc.). They are likely to be the only one to interact with the candidate.
- d. Student:** Admission Counselor, two faculty and the Dean of Admissions or Admissions Coordinator interact with the applicant, and the Dean of Admissions or Admissions Coordinator make final decisions.

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

The six Woods Hole scientific institutions, including SEA, hired Dr. Robert Livingston (Harvard Kennedy School) to assess diversity and inclusion practices and to provide recommendations as part of the Woods Hole Diversity Initiative in 2018. Part of this report (“Livingston Report”) focused on hiring and admissions practices. Admissions practices are closely tracked by the Enrollment Committee of the Board of Trustees. The admissions process also has been evaluated by outside consultants in the past.

There are numerous pathways towards changing, or suggesting changes to, hiring and admissions practices. Members of a search committee can speak to the Chair. It is not clear to everyone within the organization how to make suggestions to initiate change.

Our hiring and admission practices should be evaluated more frequently by outside consultants to ensure we are following, and continue to follow, best inclusive practices and are creating an accessible and equitable process.

7. 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?

A few faculty were hired around the same time ~2016 and two faculty were hired together ~2018. This was not planned as 'cohort hiring' and was simply coincidental because of staffing needs at those times, but the staff hired at those times report it was nice to have another newer faculty member to share experiences with.

The mission and strategic vision of SEA is periodically re-visited. These include conversations related to re-visioning the work culture, though that is not the focus. A faculty restatement of mission and vision was begun before Covid-19 furloughs affected nearly all SEA staff, but it is incomplete. There is a need to ensure collaboration across departments and levels of leadership.

SEA supports dual careers for crew, who often have seasonal jobs in addition to working for SEA. In addition, there is only informal mentoring amongst crew.

New faculty typically are assigned a mentor, but there is no standard mentoring procedure. New faculty responsibilities checklist documents recently were produced for each academic discipline.

Other considerations:

We should thoroughly review [Leveraging Promising Practices](#) to determine how we can best practice accessibility within our hiring and admissions practices.

This quote from the second URGE Session 5 reading addresses the important step of designing an offer and participating in negotiations with the favored candidate: "While a campus can make strides in making offers to a more diverse pool of candidates, it is not guaranteed that those offers will be accepted. Little scholarly attention has been focused on what leads to a candidate accepting or declining an offer. According to Tuitt and colleagues, 'presenting the candidate of choice with a competitive employment package is the institution's most direct way of signaling to a candidate that they are a valuable commodity'. (2008, p. 523). Turner (2002a) discussed the impact of offers in her guidebook on faculty hiring and explains the importance of compensation and thinking about it holistically." (p. 319-320)