

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for Texas A&M University

This is what was found by the Shamberger Lab at Texas A&M University on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

Note: We acknowledge this information is not always accessible to students and even staff. If you do not have access to this information, please reflect on your own experience and outline what admissions and/or hiring should be like to foster a diverse and inclusive community.

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?**
 - Oceanography faculty job ads include both a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and EEO statement: “Texas A&M University is committed to enriching the learning and working environment for all visitors, students, faculty, and staff by promoting a culture that embraces inclusion, diversity, equity, and accountability. Diverse perspectives, talents, and identities are vital to accomplishing our mission and living our core values. The TAMU College of Geosciences Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan can be found at <https://geosciences.tamu.edu/diversity-climate/action-plan/index.html>.”

Texas A&M University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/Veterans/Disability employer committed to building a culturally diverse educational environment. Applications from women, minorities, and members of other underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply and will be actively sought. The University is aware that attracting and retaining exceptional faculty often depends on meeting the needs of two careers and therefore implements policies that contribute to work-life balance.”
- Oceanography staff job ads include both a DEI and EEO statement: EEO statement above plus, “Texas A&M University is committed to enriching the learning and working environment for all visitors, students, faculty, and staff by promoting a culture that embraces inclusion, diversity, equity, and accountability. Diverse perspectives, talents, and identities are vital to accomplishing our mission and living our core values.”

¹ R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples, (2017).

² <https://careers.whoj.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).



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- Oceanography graduate student application: Fall 2021 applications included none. After discussions with department leadership, the following statement has been added to the Spring 2022 graduate application: “Texas A&M University is committed to building a culturally diverse educational environment for all visitors, students, faculty, and staff by promoting a culture that embraces inclusion, diversity, equity, and accountability. Diverse perspectives, talents, and identities are vital to accomplishing our mission and living our core values. Applications from individuals from minoritized groups are strongly encouraged to apply.” This statement will be included in future applications, as well as on the Oceanography website that describes our graduate programs and how to apply. We have recommended making the statement specific to the Department of Oceanography, rather than only referencing the university, e.g. “The Department of Oceanography at Texas A&M University is committed...”
- The TAMU undergraduate application requires applicants to write a DEI statement. The prompt for the statement is: “Texas A&M University believes that diversity is an important part of academic excellence and that it is essential to living our core values (loyalty, integrity, excellence, leadership, respect, and selfless service). Describe the benefits of diversity and inclusion for you personally and for the Texas A&M campus community. (250-300 words)”
- **Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**
 - Oceanography faculty job advertisements
 - ASLO, AGU, AAAS, EOS, Earth Science Women's Network, GEOTRACES, OCB.
 - The department is working with the College of Geosciences Assistant Dean for Diversity and Climate to ensure faculty positions are advertised in locations that will attract a diverse pool of applicants.
 - Oceanography graduate student recruiting
 - ASLO, SACNAS, Purdue Big 10+ Grad expo
 - Faculty largely recruit graduate students to their groups individually. This process would benefit from requiring faculty recruiting graduate students to take DEI training.
 - Consider recruiting graduate students from local minority serving institutions.



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- The department or college could consider implementing programs that bridge minority serving undergraduate programs with our graduate programs.
- The department could strengthen our relationship with the TAMU Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation and Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) programs to enhance DEI in our graduate program.
- Undergraduate recruiting
 - The College of Geosciences has a recruiting team that the Oceanography Department works closely with, which works extensively with high schools within Texas and out of state. Some programs target underserved and underrepresented communities. Examples include Aggield Saturday recruiting event and GeoX (week long high school summer camp).
 - The College of Geosciences recruiting team works with the local Blinn Community College to track students that were less successful in high school into TAMU undergraduate programs.
 - The Oceanography department does extensive local K-12 outreach. Examples include programs with the Brazos Valley Children's Museum, Boy Scout Merit Badge University, and the Texas Youth Institute.
 - The Oceanography Graduate Council (OGC) and graduate students in the department are heavily involved with local K-12 outreach efforts, including those listed above.
 - The top 10% of the graduating class in TX high schools is automatically admitted to TAMU.
 - The Oceanography department could strengthen our relationship with the TAMU LSAMP program to promote DEI in the undergraduate oceanography major.
 - The Oceanography department could strengthen undergraduate research with majors outside the College of Geoscience.
 - In addition to the GeoX high school program, the department and college could consider hosting K-12 summer camp programs to integrate students and retain them through the STEM pipeline. These camps should be free or even pay students to attend, to reach out to and enable less privileged groups to attend. Other groups have funded these sorts of programs through NSF and local partners.



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- **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?**
 - Oceanography faculty applicants: CV; Statement of Research; Statement of Teaching; Statement of your commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (not to exceed 2 pages each); and the names and contact information for at least three references.
 - Oceanography graduate applications:
 - TAMU GraduateCAS application
 - Statement of purpose: There is no specific prompt, the application simply says to upload a statement of purpose. We are working with department leadership to include a link that leads to specific guidelines for the statement.
 - TOELF or IELTS scores (International applicants only)
 - 3 letters of Recommendation
 - Undergraduate and Graduate (if applicable) transcripts. Unofficial transcripts are allowed for application and official transcripts (which usually involve a fee) are only required after admission.
 - CV: This is required in the application, but not included in the list of materials required to apply for graduate programs on the department website. We recommend including on the department website, with a link to guidelines for creating a CV, so prospective students know to put together a CV before going into the application site.
 - GRE scores are no longer required for admission to Oceanography or College of Geosciences graduate degrees. Faculty and admissions committees do NOT have access to GRE scores, even if they are submitted to TAMU.
 - A letter of support from a prospective advisor is required for the application to be evaluated by the Oceanography Recruiting and Admissions Committee (RAC). This should be clearly stated on the Admissions Requirement website for Oceanography graduate programs. Currently, the website states that it is “strongly recommended” for prospective students to contact prospective faculty advisors, but it is not clearly stated that an advisor must be identified for admission.
 - Consider requiring in the graduate application a DEI statement or responses to DEI questions, with a specific enough prompt(s) or link to guidelines so students know what is expected and are not at a disadvantage if they have never written a DEI statement before. This will



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serve the dual purpose of making underrepresented students feel more welcome and wanted in the program, and signaling to all applicants that equity and inclusion is a priority for the department and graduate program.

- Oceanography undergraduate admissions:
 - University application
 - The TAMU undergraduate application requires a DEI statement. The prompt for the statement is: “Texas A&M University believes that diversity is an important part of academic excellence and that it is essential to living our core values (loyalty, integrity, excellence, leadership, respect, and selfless service). Describe the benefits of diversity and inclusion for you personally and for the Texas A&M campus community. (250-300 words)”
 - SAT or ACT is required: this could be a barrier because these tests are expensive and have to be taken before a student knows if they will be admitted via the top 10% policy.
- **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?**
 - Oceanography faculty
 - TAMU requires a “matrix” (i.e. rubric) to be used in evaluating all non-student hires. The search committee evaluates all applicants based on the matrix and determines who is selected for virtual interviews. The matrix is not public.
 - TAMU requires department heads and search committee members to take a 2-hour Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence (STRIDE) training prior to the start of a faculty search, which is valid for 2 years and then must be retaken (<https://advance.tamu.edu/Programs/STRIDE-Workshops>).
 - The process would be improved if all faculty were required to take STRIDE training since all faculty vote on the candidates after the department-wide (on campus or virtual) interviews.
 - Department heads and search committees should build in equity steps at each stage of the process to check for biases and re-evaluate which candidates are being selected for phone and department-wide interviews.
 - Oceanography graduate students



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- The Recruiting and Admissions Committee (RAC) uses a rubric to rank graduate applications. The rubric is not public.
 - Only applicants with an identified prospective advisor who has provided a letter of support are ranked by RAC. Because individual faculty identify prospective students they would like to work with, there is potential for a number of biases to affect who is chosen for assessment by RAC.
 - This process could be improved by requiring all members of RAC and all faculty who are recruiting grad students to take STRIDE or similar DEI training (preferably every 2 years as is done for faculty search committees) to enhance inclusivity of recruitment and assessment.
- **Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?**
 - Oceanography faculty
 - Faculty from the department are on the search committee, which evaluates applications, does virtual interviews, and selects which applicants are invited for department-wide interviews on campus, or recently, virtually due to covid.
 - During on campus or virtual department-wide interviews, applicants give an open presentation and meet with faculty, department and college leadership, grad students, and the search committee.
 - All faculty vote (anonymously) on candidates.
 - The Department Head makes the final offer based on recommendations from the search committee, faculty, and grad students, and after approval from the Dean of the College of Geosciences.
 - Department heads and search committees should build in equity steps at each stage of the process to check for biases in discussions of candidates with faculty and grad students.
 - Oceanography graduate students
 - Individual faculty determine which prospective students are evaluated by RAC for admission to Oceanography research-based MS and PhD programs. Once approved by RAC, the individual faculty advisor determines whether or not they want to accept the student. There is no option to start a research-based MS or PhD in Oceanography without the agreement of a faculty advisor, including a letter of support written by the faculty advisor and submitted directly to RAC. We strongly recommend that this part of the processes be clarified on the Oceanography Graduate Admissions website.



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- The non-thesis Masters of Ocean Science and Technology (MOST) program does not require an individual faculty advisor, but students must pay for this program (research and teaching assistantships are not offered for the MOST program), which presents a significant barrier.
 - Pre-RAC evaluation and interactions with prospective advisors and lab members varies between faculty members, ranging from emails with the advisor to video meetings with entire lab groups.
 - Prospective students that have been accepted to the Oceanography research-based MS and PhD programs are invited to an in-person, 2-day recruitment event where students are introduced to the graduate program, department, university, College Station, prospective lab groups, and current students. Travel, food, and lodging are paid for. However, due to covid, recently this information has been distilled to a half day virtual event.
 - Undergraduate admissions are controlled at the University level.
- **Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**
 - Hiring and recruiting was recently evaluated at the college level in the development of the College of Geosciences Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (<https://geosciences.tamu.edu/diversity-climate/action-plan/index.html>). Goal #2 of the plan states, "Increase the representation and retention of diverse students, faculty, and staff across the college. Promote the development and implementation of recruitment strategies that work to address bias and advance promising practices to increase the representation of underrepresented individuals."
 - Strategy 1: Actively utilize recruitment opportunities and incorporate the process to address conscious and unconscious bias to recruit diverse undergraduate and graduate students with a focus on individuals from under-represented backgrounds.
 - Strategy 2: Actively leverage recruitment opportunities and incorporate processes to address conscious and unconscious bias to recruit diverse faculty and staff with a focus on individuals from under-represented backgrounds.
 - Strategy 3: Support increased retention among BIPOC students, faculty and staff through increased access and engagement in mentoring opportunities



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- Individual departments largely control their hiring and admissions processes and can make changes as they see fit. However, the college does have a strong influence on the policies of the departments. E.g.:
 - Departments were strongly advised by the college to drop the GRE as a requirement for graduate admissions.
 - The Dean of the College of Geosciences must approve all faculty job advertisements and has recently required language in the ads to be broad, rather than specific to particular subfields within the departments, to encourage a diverse range of applicants.
 - The Dean of the College of Geosciences must approve all faculty hires and therefore can, and does, apply pressure to departments to be more inclusive.
- The Oceanography Recruiting and Admissions Committee (RAC) evaluates assessment metrics for undergraduate and graduate admissions and scholarships 1 to 2 times a year. Changes require approval by a majority of the 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”⁶?**
 - Oceanography Faculty
 - Cohort hiring is used regularly at the college level for hires across multiple departments, but maintaining cohorts after hiring is not actively facilitated. The college could provide cohort building activities.
 - Dual career support and partner hires for faculty is a strength at Texas A&M, which has a Dual-Career Program (<https://dof.tamu.edu/Faculty-Resources/DUAL-CAREER-PARTNER-PLACEMENT>) specifically to facilitate these hires. Several recently hired Oceanography faculty worked with the department and this program to facilitate partner hires.
 - Organized faculty mentoring in the Department of Oceanography has been absent, but was recently instituted with our last two hires. Because faculty mentoring has not been successfully instituted in the past, the department will need to assess and adjust frequently as this mentoring program proceeds.
 - Oceanography Graduate Students
 - The Graduate Learning Community (GLC) is a mandatory class for new students to encourage graduate cohorts, cover the details of degree requirements, and facilitate career development.



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- The Oceanography Graduate Council (OGC) is a student led organization that provides a sense of community for graduate students, holds social events, performs science outreach, does fundraising, and provides competitive funds for graduate research.
- Mentoring of graduate students would be improved if all faculty advisors were required to take mentoring training because the majority of student mentoring is done by individual faculty advisors.
- Undergraduate:
 - University wide: Hullabaloo U, FISH Camps, Honors Program, and individual undergraduate programs often have a cohort building required course.
 - Oceanography majors have a student led organization (TAMU OCEAN) that holds social and career development events that foster a sense of community.
 - Oceanography majors are required to take a Professional Communication in Oceanography 3 credit course that includes information on careers in oceanography, developing a CV, applying for jobs, writing cover letters, mock interviews, giving presentations, and effective written and oral communication techniques.
 - Students that do undergraduate research in the Department of Oceanography receive mentoring by faculty advisors and the graduate students in their labs. This could be improved by making research mentoring more formalized.