

Hiring and Admissions Policies

In auditing our hiring and admissions practices, as well as developing new policy ideas, we broke the process down into four broad categories:

- 1) “Building the applicant pool” addresses how and where we advertise positions.
- 2) “Application process” addresses the materials we require for each position and how we can remove barriers and support applicants in the process of applying.
- 3) “Evaluating applicants” addresses our internal search and admission processes including who evaluates applicants, how they are trained, and what the standards of evaluation are.
- 4) “Attracting and retaining applicants” addresses broader institutional efforts to make it attractive and feasible for diverse applicants to accept and succeed in positions at our institution. This could include efforts like cohort hires, mentorship programs, or relocation support.

In each category, we considered both the graduate admission process and the postdoc and faculty hiring processes.

1) Building the applicant pool

Where and how are positions advertised? (i.e., job boards, job fairs, word of mouth, etc) Are there specific strategies implemented for reaching underrepresented demographics?

Stanford Earth is currently hiring for both a postdoc fellowship and tenure track position with a focus on increasing diversity within the school. Some of the strategies from these searches included:

- Advertising on listservs for minoritized groups
 - Keeping the application process at the school (rather than department) level to better serve applicants whose work may fall across department lines
 - Writing job advertisements that encourage and target the application towards minoritized groups, but without excluding applications from others
 - For example, from the postdoc advertisement: “We especially seek to attract applications from promising scholars from underrepresented backgrounds in STEM as well as those who are in emerging areas of Earth, Energy, and Environmental sciences that intersect with issues of human impact and equity.”
 - Including the Associate Chairs for Diversity and Inclusion in the hiring process - these are department-level faculty service positions for folks working on DEI strategies.
- It is not clear to what extent individual departments follow these kinds of practices for typical tenure track hires.

This process is unusual for postdoc positions, most of which are advertised by word of mouth or personal networks rather than with formal job advertisements. Postdoc hiring generally does not have a committee process (outside of department or higher level fellowships) and faculty can generally hire directly into their groups based on their funding.

For graduate students, the actual process of determining which professors are seeking and admitting students in any given year is similarly opaque. Prospective students generally need to check individual faculty webpages, email them directly, or make connections through their personal networks to find out which research groups are admitting students. Stanford Earth DEI office does run dedicated recruiting efforts at the AGU Fall Meeting as well as the SACNAS and AISES conferences and Stanford has broader diversity recruiting efforts through programs like DARE and SURGE as well. DARE is a doctoral fellowship that aims to increase diversity in professoriate and includes funding for fellows to make recruiting trips. SURE is a summer research program at Stanford under the NSF REU program and a significant number of alumni have later joined Stanford Earth as graduate students. The DEI has found that the best tactic for conference recruiting was to engage individually with students at their posters or presentations, rather than at dedicated recruiting round tables.

Are EEO statements included in advertisements? Are other inclusion statements or resources easily available to applicants?

An EEO statement is provided with the most recent school-level advertisements, but it is not clear that this has always been the case for department level hires.

Strategy: Aligning your faculty job search with University Diversity missions. “Consistent with Stanford University’s **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEAL)** vision and commitment to diversity (broadly defined) among its faculty, students, and staff, we especially seek to attract applications from promising scholars with historically underrepresented backgrounds in traditional STEM fields, as well as in emerging areas of Earth, Energy, and Environmental sciences, including research areas that intersect with societal issues.”

Strategy: Asking for Diversity statement (1 page) that highlights either contribution to diversity through service/leaders or through personal experience (the addition of through personal experience is key here): “a diversity statement that demonstrates the applicant’s commitment and potential to contribute to Stanford’s goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion through personal experience or perspective, scholarship, teaching, or service (1 page)”

This is the EEO statement we worked with general counsel on: “Stanford Earth deeply appreciates the value of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community, and defines diversity broadly to include (among other things) diversity of genders, races and ethnicities, cultures, physical and learning differences, sexual orientations and identities, veteran status, and work and life experiences. Stanford is an equal employment opportunity and affirmative action employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. Stanford welcomes applications from all who would bring additional dimensions to the University’s research, teaching and clinical missions.”

Policy Ideas:

- Implementing best practices in job ads (<https://environment.uw.edu/faculty-job-advertisement-guidelines/>)
- Continue and expand admissions recruiting targeted at minority serving institutions and conferences like SACNAS (<https://www.sacnas.org/>)

- Develop faculty-level relationships and research collaborations with minority serving institutions
- Targeted recruiting for postdoc fellowships and faculty hires by implementing a process for encouraging faculty to directly reach out and invite applications from diverse candidates within their fields
- Encourage formal advertising of postdoc positions rather than relying on word of mouth. For example, a School of Earth level clearing house for postdoc positions that PIs submit advertisements to when they get a new grant with postdoc funding.
- Make as many of these ideas systematic as possible at the school level - provide departments with a framework, requirements, or considerations for advertising positions
- Integrate these practices for graduate student searches and recruitment too
- Integrate these practices at the postdoc level and invite more BIPOC members to interview
- Stanford's position as an elite institution can make it seem unattainable, even with adequate advertising. Integrating some aspect of showing where current faculty/postdocs/students came from (particularly folks with less "traditional" backgrounds) and their paths into recruiting and advertising could be important.

Note from our DEI office: A number of these policy ideas are actually in the works or being considered as part of the "engagement" portion of the new DEI action plan. Even as we are working toward creating more opportunities to diversify faculty, postdocs, we need to simultaneously make this an institutional that is always engaged and in partnership with diverse researchers, institutions, and networks --not just when it comes to when we have hiring opportunities. Nothing says we want you more than an already engaged school with diverse scholars.

2) Application process

What kinds of materials are required of applicants? Are any of these potential barriers that could be lowered?

Graduate applications:

- Application Fee, academic transcripts, statement of purpose, 3 letters of recommendation, GRE (department dependent), TOEFL scores (if applicable), reaching out to advisors ahead of time is not a formal part of the process but is generally necessary for a successful application

Postdoc hiring:

- Largely network-based which makes the application process very variable and often opaque, although it is more defined for specific (internal and external) fellowships
- Could include cover letter, CV, recommendation letters, research statement, and diversity statement (Stanford Earth postdoc fellowship, for example) or nothing

Faculty hiring:

- Cover letter, CV, letters of recommendation (typically three), research statement, teaching statement, diversity statement, interviews, job talk

Policy Ideas:

- Drop GRE requirement or shift towards holistic evaluation models
- Increase scope and publicization for graduate application fee waivers (should be easily accessible on the application website as part of the application, for example) . Clarify why Stanford Earth has application fees at all (something that could potentially be dropped?)
- Institutional support or involvement in programs that mentor applicants through the process (NextProf - <https://nextprof.engin.umich.edu/>, etc)
- Virtual “AMA” (“ask me anything”) with professors looking to take on graduate students during the Fall to facilitate prospective graduate students networking with faculty
- Adding more detailed information about funding resources to graduate admissions pages, including specific external funding sources (i.e. NSF GRFP, NASA FINESST, etc..) as well as specific internal funding resources
- Provide a high and low and high range of salary for current faculty/postdocs posted (faculty/postdocs)
 - Should have a note that specifies some of the salary levels for postdocs are set by funding agencies (ex: NSF) and may therefore differ from Stanford-funded positions (for transparency)
- Formalize postdoc hiring and materials process
 - Note that this could only address Stanford-funded postdocs; external funding has its own process
 - Could include a set of guidelines for folks who want to bring an externally funded postdoc to Stanford (how to contact an advisor to work on grant app, etc)
- Faculty: post rubric for how to write (and evaluate) diversity statements:
<https://facultydiversity.ucsd.edu/recruitment/contributions-to-diversity.html>
https://facultydiversity.ucsd.edu/_files/c2d-guidelines.pdf
(These are examples, whatever is actually used at our institution is what we should post)

3) Evaluating applicants

Who evaluates applicants and how is the process conducted? Are there public or private rubrics used in the evaluation? Is there a process for identifying and addressing biases in the process?

It is variable. Postdoc hiring and graduate admissions are mostly focused the individual lab level, where faculty hiring will have at least a department level search committee and some input at the school level.

Graduate Admissions:

Applications for graduate students depend on an admissions committee formed in the department and the acceptance of a faculty member in their lab. But policies and practices depend on the department. There are some general requirements that are overseen by the

Graduate Program. For rubrics, best practices have been shared with departments on holistic admissions, but rubrics are not publicly available.

- Stanford VPGE provides guidance on holistic admissions:
<https://vpge.stanford.edu/gateways/faculty-staff/graduate-admissions/holistic-review-factors>
- More guidance provided by VPGE:
<https://vpge.stanford.edu/academic-guidance/policies-planning>
- DEI Office provides advice on this (if departments seek it out)

Postdoc Hiring:

There are 2 postdoc positions for underrepresented scientists under the IDEAL Initiative. The Stanford Earth Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, introduced in 2020, represents a new step in diversifying the academic pipeline in the geosciences. There's a selection committee formed by staff and ACDIs, and all applicants are required to submit a diversity statement. The rubric was proposed by the DEI office in collaboration with the members of the committee. There is direct ACDI or faculty equity advisor involvement in the hiring process. There are other postdoc fellowship opportunities at both the department level (e.g., Thompson Fellowship in Geophysics) and university level (Postdoctoral Research Fellows Program) which have similar committee selection structures. However, the majority of positions are still at the research lab level on individual PI's grant funding.

Faculty Hiring:

In the last year, under the IDEAL Initiative, there have been some cohort hiring practices, trying to recruit more BIPOC faculty members. In general, faculty hiring involves a committee that includes student representation (a grad interview panel is standard and a student opinion is a vote for the hiring panel's recommendation). A diversity statement is required. There are some anti-bias material in hiring

- Example Race on STEM:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aLQPrEIVV6Nwq3v_1CIW6VPhHbGV0RuS/view
- Best practices and resources available at:
<https://facultydevelopment.stanford.edu/recruitment/search-committee-resources>

Policy Ideas:

- Integrate the best practices from the current diversity hire initiatives into faculty hiring as a whole
- Require direct ACDI or faculty equity advisor involvement in all stages of designing and running faculty searches
- Encourage or require similar audits and oversight of graduate admissions practice and postdoc hiring, include anti-bias training to admission committees
- One thing that comes in making equitable processes is how the advertisement should essentially advertise the general areas that the committee is using to evaluate candidates. So the rubric includes what was asked of the candidate in the advertisement. For instance, for faculty search, we asked for a research statement,

diversity statement, teaching statement, so as you can imagine the rubric reflects those three major areas. As for whether or how much of the details of internal rubric should be revealed - that discussion is still in the works with faculty.

4) Attracting and retaining applicants

Does the institution use best practices like cohort hiring, mentoring, dual career support and partner hires, or other such strategies?

Cohort hiring is somewhat new but has definitely been implemented in the current cluster hire (<https://president.stanford.edu/2020/06/30/advancing-racial-justice-at-stanford/>) and seems to be gaining some traction as a hiring method. This obviously requires multiple open billets at the same time which can be an issue if hiring is left at the department level although it is still being discussed at that level as a measure for bringing diversity and attracting more candidates.

Stanford has a dedicated staff position that helps dual career applicants navigate the process, but it is not clear that there is any similar resource for postdocs. The university has an Office of Faculty Development, Engagement, and Diversity that is intended to support faculty retention and recruitment efforts: <https://facultydevelopment.stanford.edu/>.

At the postdoc level, Stanford has an impressive level of support for Postdocs compared to other institutions

- Training opportunities including Stanford Postdoc Teaching Certificate (very helpful for folks who want to go on to be faculty)
- Existing groups that serve to build community at the postdoc level (SE3 postdoc programs with Audrey Yau)
- Dedicated Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

At the graduate level, there are a wide variety of fellowships and student support resources, but awareness and accessibility are often poor.

Policy ideas:

At the graduate student level:

- Onus of learning about DEI initiatives typically falls onto applicants - these should be better advertised. For example, DEI discussion sessions as part of prospective student visits
 - As part of the new DEI action plan, we aim localized DEI best practices and knowledge to departments. For instance, sharing application fee waiver content and Dean's Grad Scholars content for departments to put on their own admissions websites to improve cross-promotion for these resources.
- Need more clarity for how to apply/recruit: National Name Exchange for BIPOC recruitment
- Current DEI statement in graduate student applications are unreasonably short responses and could be expanded
- Normalize and advertise leave of absence policies

At the postdoc level:

- Benefits management and resources for postdocs are often spread across multiple offices and can require a lot of direct coordination and “exception paperwork”. An internal workflow/resource guide for new postdocs could alleviate some of that burden.

More generally:

- Clear resources and confidential points of contact for prospective students/hires to ask questions about campus culture and support structures for minoritized/underrepresented identities
- Group mentoring system potentially more effective -- cohort of people assigned to cohort of mentors, Group mentoring, cohort, multiple mentor models
- Housing affordability in the Bay Area is a major concern for postdoc and faculty hires. Better advertising of housing support programs to faculty applicants and potential flexibility in starting pay/offers to support relocation on an individual basis could be important. On-campus or Stanford subsidized housing options and availability for postdocs would also be significant.
- In general, Stanford has a lot of support programs but it requires a lot of digging and coordination to find them - making these resources easily accessible to applicants and proactively providing information as part of job advertisements and application and interview processes is important.