



This is what was found by the Toolik Pod at Toolik Field Station on Hiring (Admissions policies not applicable), as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve to meet our commitment to creating an actively inclusive scientific community.

A Note about hiring and the Toolik Community

Toolik Field Station (TFS) falls within the structure of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Toolik Field Station hires a variety of temporary and full time staff in both academic and technical positions and uses a combination of UAF guidelines and its own policies to advertise, recruit, and fill these roles. However, the vast majority of people working at Toolik every year are hired by projects based outside of UAF which Toolik (and this pod) have very little control over. This is an audit of Toolik Field Station's hiring practices but will also provide some guidelines for helping associated projects make their hiring process more transparent and accessible to people of color and other communities historically excluded from arctic science.

Audit of Current Practices

Toolik field station employs a variety of seasonal and full time staff in both academic and technical positions. To complete this audit we reviewed six job postings for seasonal support staff, seasonal science staff, and full time support staff in 2019 and 2020. We also incorporated information from the Station Managers and other staff members about hiring practices, recent changes, and goals for their departments.

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

All job postings include the Affirmative Action Statement, "UA is an AA/EO employer and educational institution and prohibits illegal discrimination against any individual" with a link to the University's nondiscrimination policy. UA's complete nondiscrimination policy states that students staff and applicants cannot be discriminated against on the basis of "race, religion, color, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, physical or mental disability, status as a protected veteran, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, parenthood, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation or belief, genetic informatio, or other legally protected status."

UA also has an Affirmative Action plan that includes "making intensified, goal-oriented efforts to substantially increase the participation of groups where their representation is less than proportionate to their availability, providing reasonable accommodations to employees and students with disabilities; and ensuring that employment opportunities are widely disseminated to agencies and organizations that serve underrepresented protected classes." As part of the UA system, Toolik's hiring practices comply with these

stated goals however it is unclear how these goals are met in practice and whether there is any oversight from the University. This deliverable includes a list of suggested changes and augmentations to Toolik's standard hiring practices to better ensure equity in the hiring process and actively meet these goals.

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. All of Toolik Field Station's jobs are posted on the [Careers at UA](#) page. These posts also go automatically to [Indeed](#).
 - b. Seasonal science positions: job openings and descriptions are often shared through Ecolog or via Twitter and Facebook. Strong networks among scientists on these platforms means there is usually a deep pool of applicants.
 - c. Technical/non-science positions: harder to advertise effectively. In the end word of mouth is the primary way information about open positions at Toolik is spread. Often these positions attract a much shallower pool of applicants.
 - d. As of March 2021 Toolik has a new website with a [job board](#) where all Toolik jobs will be posted. Projects from other institutions that do work at Toolik have the capability to submit positions to this job board. We are hopeful that this space will make all openings at Toolik easier to see and apply for.
 - e. A list of [relevant job boards](#) to help advertise positions to a diverse pool is currently in development.

3. **What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?**

All positions require a resume/CV, cover letter, and the names of three professional references in their application materials. Some positions, for example the EMT assistant, require specific certifications. Toolik has both full time and seasonal staff which means experience requirements vary from none, to a year of college, to 15 years of professional experience. We feel this is one strength of Toolik's current hiring practices; there are opportunities for people with a wide variety of backgrounds--not just academics. For this reason we feel that we reduce the importance of "prestige" in the hiring process.

Due to Toolik's unique position hundreds of miles from the nearest settlement, all job descriptions include ability to live and work in a remote setting as a requirement. Also required in all descriptions is a valid driver's license and ability to operate large vehicles, as well as ability to lift and carry heavy things. Some of these requirements should be preferred qualities, as we will discuss in the next section.

4. **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?**

UA requires hiring or department managers to submit rubrics with specific questions for each step of the hiring process that must be approved by HR before job descriptions can be posted. For example, a preliminary set of questions that all the applicants are reviewed on, , a second set of questions that are used to determine who will be interviewed, , and a third set of interview questions. There is also a preapproved set of questions that are posed to references. Hiring managers can write and change these questions to suit their needs but this must be done and approved by HR before the hiring process begins. The intermediate rubric is quantitative and hiring managers must assign every applicant a number in each category as well as a final score.

The rubric system is meant to reduce bias, but remains an imperfect system. Because everything must be preapproved by HR, it can limit managers ability to tailor the rubrics to their needs in a way that introduces bias. For example, previous rubrics placed too much weight on previous experience working in polar field camps. Any candidate with experience in Antarctica or Greenland would vastly outscore other qualified candidates without cold weather experience. In reality, experience working in cold conditions is not important for a seasonal position at Toolik and forces managers to overlook qualified candidates with different experience. The rubrics have been changed to eliminate this bias but other biases remain.

UAF Search Committee Guidelines (<https://uaf.edu/hr/files/ppas-recruitment/searchgcommitteeuide.pdf>)

- I. *Preliminary Screening*
 - a. The committee conducts initial screening to determine whether applicants meet the requirements for the position, as specified in the job posting. This screening is based on the resume and other documents submitted, not on personal contact. Applicants who do not meet the posted requirements are screened out at this stage.
- II. *Intermediate Review*
 - a. This screening process is more qualitative in character than the first screening.
 - b. The committee thoroughly examines applicant material and assesses the degree to which the applicant has met the criteria established by the committee as outlined in the Position Description and the Job Posting.
 - c. Documentation should contain a quantifiable rating system, based on the job description. If there are criteria which have greater importance for satisfactory performance, they must be identified and weighted as appropriate. Intermediate screening processes will include written documentation that supports screening results.
- III. *Interview*
 - a. The committee conducts the final interviews and evaluation of the candidates.
 - b. On completing interviews, the committee prepares a written summary of the qualifications and overall impressions received from each finalist.
 - c. For candidates screened out at this stage, the committee documents the reason.
- IV. *References*
 - a. The committee conducts reference checks as determined by the hiring official and prepares a written summary of the responses and overall impressions received from each finalist.
 - b. If the committee wishes to eliminate candidates at this stage, the committee documents the reason and consults with their UAF HR Consultant for approval.
- V. *Hiring Recommendations*
 - a. The committee recommends to the Hiring Authority a list of finalists (ranked or unranked – as determined by the Hiring Authority).
 - b. The committee provides the Hiring Authority with input from committee participants. It is hoped that committee members will reach consensus. If not, the committee may provide majority and minority recommendations.

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

For seasonal jobs, the manager of each department has the final say in hiring decisions. Typically, it is the responsibility of these managers to screen candidates and conduct interviews. The hiring committee for full time positions typically includes three to four members including the manager, supervisor if different from manager, co-worker, and an outside member from one of the other departments. The final decision for full time positions is typically made by the manager in consultation with members of the management team.

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

The hiring process has not been evaluated by outside consultants. Currently Toolik Field Station has very little power to change UAF's hiring processes or guidelines

7. **Strategies and Goals to improve the equity of hiring practices**

There is a need to improve the recruitment process as well as how hiring decisions are made in order to increase the diversity of Toolik staff. Just as there is no silver bullet strategy that will work in all institutions, the variety of positions that Toolik hires mean a variety of strategies will be necessary to make hiring more equitable in all departments. Some strategies we should implement include:

1. **Improved advertisement of open positions, especially non-science positions.** There is a need to both widen and deepen the pool of applicants for Toolik's non-science jobs. Often these positions receive very few applications and are often filled by returning applicants or people already a part of the polar field camp world. Though there are valid reasons to rehire people, or hire people within the field, this will not increase diversity among Toolik staff. Job descriptions should be posted on at regional community and technical colleges as well as on local union job boards.
2. **Taking a long-term approach to recruiting.** This suggestion came up over and over again in this session's readings and interview. Taking a long term approach to hiring is a way to increase diversity across all Toolik positions. Strategies to achieve this could include
 - a. Attending more job fairs at UAF, UA, Alaska Pacific University, regional technical and community colleges and local high schools. Staff should attend these events even when no positions are actively recruiting to build relationships with students and staff/faculty.
 - b. Attending the Alaska Federation of Natives conference and other Native Alaskan conferences to share Toolik's work and opportunities.
 - c. Inviting speakers from a broader pool to give talking shop. Funding to bring people to Toolik for a day or two to give a camp wide lecture and learn about the work being done at Toolik would make this possible. Talking Shops tend to be science focused but the community would also probably be interested in talks from UAF faculty from outside the sciences, Tribal Council members from Anaktuvuk Pass, and others.
3. **Creating more short term internships and other entry level opportunities.** One strength of the Toolik community is the unique networking opportunities that arise in such a small and communal living environment. It is not uncommon for summer jobs or REUs to turn into full time or graduate positions. Therefore, an important way to increase the diversity of people in all positions at Toolik is to increase diversity at the entry level which can be achieved by creating more

internships, short term jobs, REUs, and other undergraduate opportunities. This will require dedicated effort by staff to create these opportunities and manage interns, as well as funding to pay these salaries or stipends. Sustained partnerships with minority-serving institutions to create internships specifically for their students is another avenue to consider.

4. **Job descriptions should include a specific statement on DEI to reaffirm our commitment to removing barriers to people from historically excluded backgrounds and building an actively inclusive community.** During the interview stage include a diversity question to assess the applicant's knowledge of the value and importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - a. Statement in newest job advert: In addition to the technical duties, engaging and interacting with the TFS community is a large part of the job of everyone who works at TFS. Toolik Field Station is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment to everyone at the station. Each member of our staff is committed to working to build and sustain an equitable and inclusive work environment where cultural diversity is celebrated and valued. We believe diversity benefits and enriches the TFS community.
5. **Reviewing all job descriptions critically.** The requirements listed in all job descriptions, especially seasonal descriptions which are often recycled year after year, should be reviewed. Only essential qualifications and experience should be listed as requirements and everything else should be listed as a "preferred experience". This should broaden the type of experience and applicant who qualify for positions.

In addition vague language should be made more descriptive. For example, Toolik is described as "remote" in all job descriptions, however by Alaska standards, a camp with up to 120 people is hardly remote. In contrast, overly specific language or qualification should be removed where appropriate to provide alternative options for potential candidates to meet the qualifications.

6. Critically reviewing hiring rubrics. UAF requires the use of rubrics to assess candidates. In the past, as noted above, the structure and weighting these rubrics inadvertently introduced bias in favor of individuals with prior experience in Antarctica or Greenland. Rubrics should be critically reviewed for other instances of bias. Additionally, rubrics are important but reliance on a candidates overall score should be discouraged, especially in the Intermediate Review stage (described above). The Intermediate Review (described above) which uses quantitative scoring should use the score and rates to group applicants into groups of minimally qualified, qualified, and highly qualified. should be "qualitative" but the UAF system currently requires documentation showing candidates were assessed quantitatively. The University of Washington Hiring guide states that total score should never be used as the sole deciding factor and instead suggests ranking candidates as "minimally qualified, qualified, and maximally qualified" to allow for broader interpretation of what "qualified" means (<https://hr.uw.edu/diversity/hiring/candidate-evaluation-form-tips-and-guidelines/>). Toolik could develop an internal system to evaluate every candidate qualitatively then assign all "maximally qualified"

applicants the same numeric value to satisfy UAF's requirements.

7. **Increase buy-in from all institutions working at Toolik Field Station.** Toolik directly hires and employs only a fraction of the people living and working at the field station every summer. In order to increase the diversity of people at Toolik, the many institutions who work at Toolik will also need to increase the diversity of their research teams. Toolik has no power to affect hiring practices at these institutions but can bring these discussions to the forefront throughout the summer by:
 - a. Dedicating a part of each Users' Forum to diversity discussions
 - b. Having at least one Talking Shop lecture dedicated to a diversity topic every summer
 - c. Providing information about diversity initiatives at Toolik