URGE
Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SANTA CRUZ

Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University/Organization - URGE Deliverable

This is what was found by the University of Santa Cruz Pod on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve. At the end of each section, we have included bolded "**Suggestions**," which we believe should be discussed and considered, and "**Action Items**," which we believe should be prioritized and implemented.

- **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]?**
  - An example: https://recruit.ucsc.edu/JPF00734
  - **General to UCSC:** "The University of California is an Equal Opportunity/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, age, or protected veteran status. UC Santa Cruz is committed to excellence through diversity and strives to establish a climate that welcomes, celebrates, and promotes respect for the contributions of all students and employees. Inquiries regarding the University's equal employment opportunity policies may be directed to the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064 or by phone at (831) 459-3676."
  - **Earth & Planetary Sciences Department:** Beginning, "The Earth and Planetary Sciences department is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all members of our community, so that everyone can bring their authentic selves and achieve their full potential," the EPS department has a general commitment to diversity on their website.
  - **Action Item:** Add an additional diversity statement in every job posting that reflects our commitment to diversity as an important consideration in the hiring process.
  - **Action Item:** Add an additional general diversity statement as well as one relating to the admissions process to the Ocean Science Department's website, which currently has none. This website is in the process of being recreated and

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[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).

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updated, and these statements could be added to the new website, online sometime within the next year.

- **Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**
  - General jobs
    - [UCSC website](#) - internal and external applicants are separate.
    - Department chairs presumably have access to job boards and listservs, but this is unclear to the graduate student population.
    - **Action Item:** Share job postings with nationwide organisations which represent historically underrepresented groups in STEM, as well as with universities which serve historically underrepresented groups in STEM.

  - Graduate admissions
    - Funded positions often advertised (listservs, specific job boards, Twitter)
    - At the present time there are many "passive" recruitment strategies, including word of mouth communication of open/ funded graduate positions or of promising applicants and advisor and laboratory networks are leveraged and privileged over open recruitment.
    - **Suggestion:** Create a page on a public facing website where faculty accepting students list the positions they are offering. Be specific: if they are just taking applications for open-ended projects, say that they are accepting students. This would reduce guess-work for students cold-emailing prospective advisors.
    - **Suggestion:** Faculty could have short video explaining their lab's work, what they look for in a grad student (interests, skills, etc.) and how to contact them (or meet them in person, such as at conferences).
    - **Suggestion:** Between application submission and acceptance, faculty reach out to graduate students who apply to their lab and discuss potential projects. This puts all applicants on an even playing field whether they knew they were supposed to contact faculty in advance or not (which generally requires mentorship by faculty or a current graduate student, and changes from subfield to subfield.)

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- **Suggestion:** Provide more direct and structured support for undergrad STEM majors in the EPS department so they believe that continuing in the geosciences is a viable career option:
    - E.g., Prioritize inclusive atmosphere and teaching strategies so students feel a community within the department
    - Weeding out students from prereq classes (e.g., calculus) often disproportionately cuts out underrepresented students based on how the classes are taught (these classes also affect grad school admissions). Eliminate this practice as much as possible within the EPS department.
- **Suggestion:** Integrate skills for writing graduate school/fellowship applications in for-credit classes into curriculum:
    - Undergrad senior thesis class: write an NSF GRFP proposal and graduate school application
    - First-year graduate school class: write an NSF GRFP proposal or other grant proposal
    - Nth-year grad school class: write a postdoc/faculty application
- **Action Item:** Targeted recruitment of minoritized and underrepresented communities, e.g. sending funded grad opportunities to HBCUs.
- **Action Item:** Include information in undergraduate courses about how to apply to graduate school.
- **Action Item:** Expand information on department website about how to apply to graduate school and disseminate widely

- **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?**
    - [EPS Grad Admissions](#)
        - EPS does not require the GRE
        - EPS [mentions](#) that you should contact potential advisors on website
    - [OS Grad Admissions](#)
        - Certain classes (geosciences, math, etc.) needed for admission, but you can make these up while in grad school if need be.
        - OS Department also mentions that applicants should contact future advisors on the Department's website, and provides a ["how-to"](#) document.

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- ■ OS also provides an "application guide" with steps.
- ○ General Requirements
  - ■ See complete list of department GRE guidelines here (no UCSC departments will require GRE starting Fall 2021)
  - ■ UCSC-wide Graduate Division application instructions
  - ■ Letters of recommendation:
    - ● **Action Item:** If requiring letters of rec, provide a prompt so letter writers can craft a letter demonstrating what the admissions committee would like to see.
  - ■ No GPA cutoff is explicitly stated.
  - ■ Fees (fee waivers exist but are not well advertised and limited in number, further they are difficult to access logistically)
    - ● **Action Item:** Post explanation of the fee waiver process on the department and graduate admissions website.
    - ● **Action Item:** Decrease the barriers, paperwork and procedures necessary to access these waivers.
- ○ Essays on DEI:
  - ■ OS/EPS prompt for personal history statement: "UC Santa Cruz is interested in a diverse and inclusive graduate student population. In an essay, discuss how your personal background informs your decision to pursue a graduate degree. Include any educational, familial, cultural, economic, or social experiences, challenges, or opportunities relevant to your academic journey; how you might contribute to social or cultural diversity within your chosen field; and/or how you might serve educationally underrepresented segments of society with your degree."
  - ■ While a personal statement that encompasses Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is a required portion of the graduate application in the Earth and Planetary Sciences and Ocean Sciences departments, it is primarily used to ascertain if an applicant should receive certain fellowships such as the Cota-Robles Fellowship. It is uncertain if potential advisors use it in their assessment of prospective applicants. The DEI component of the personal statement is not explicitly required (except for OS).
  - ■ **Action Item:** Reframe prompt to focus on how applicants will contribute to advancing diversity initiatives, with freedom to discuss aspects of personal identity if they choose. Carefully word this so it doesn't feel like

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the "oppression olympics." In reframing, make it clear that addressing DEI is a mandatory part of the personal history essay.

- **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?**
  - Neither a description of the process nor a rubric is currently public for either the OS or EPS departments, to the best of our knowledge.
  - **For graduate school applications**: Evaluations are dependent upon the personal preferences of the faculty to whom the potential candidate is applying. This process is fairly opaque and non-standardized.
  - **For faculty hires:**
    - New to EPS department this year: diversity statement is evaluated first, then the hiring committee looks at the rest of the application
    - Teaching statement, publication record, research interests, previous education all evaluated
    - Interview and public talk evaluated (though criteria are unclear)
    - Many interpersonal relationships are leveraged and privileged. Hires don't always reflect the job posting very well which adds to opaqueness of decision-making.
    - Hiring committee ultimately votes on who to hire. Graduate students often get one collective vote.
  - **Suggestion:** Faculty have a standard email template they can use to respond to all applicants who contact them about potential graduate positions so that all applicants receive the same form of initial communication and information.
  - **Suggestion:** (based on this NPR article)
    - Someone proctors interview so these interviews are not based on bias
    - Have individual interviews with applicant so search/admissions committee members do not bias each other by being in the room at the same time
  - **Suggestion:** Consider putting less weight on letters of recommendation. For grad admissions, consider looking for qualities in an applicant that can be demonstrated outside of a lab, and value letters from non-tenure track faculty (previous employers, etc) equally.

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- ○ **Suggestion:** Unknown if names are included when reviewing applications, but we suggest they are removed from applications until after a "short list" has been made and interviews begin.
- ○ **Action Item:** Decide what qualities faculty want to see in successful graduate applicants, with weight on DEI. Then, rewrite essay prompts and requirements (above) to specifically ask applicants to discuss these qualities. Finally, craft a rubric which will be used to evaluate each applicant based on these qualities in the same way. This rubric will only work if it is ensured the application instructions clearly ask all applicants to discuss these qualities. Consider making the rubric public.

- ● **Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?**
  - ○ Grad admissions:
    - ■ Internal fellowship (Chancellor's, Cota Robles) decisions are made by the admissions committee
    - ■ Faculty have the power to decide which applicant they want to admit to their lab.
    - ■ In EPS, there are three faculty members who serve on the admissions committee who review all applications in entirety.
  - ○ Faculty searches:
    - ■ Recent OS grad student involvement in faculty search where grad students interview each candidate over coffee/breakfast. Grads choose their first candidate and get one collective "vote".
    - ■ Earth Science prospective faculty also have a graduate student coffee/breakfast.
    - ■ Otherwise faculty comprise the search committee, as part of their service requirement.
    - ■ EPS usually has a graduate student on the faculty search committee

- ● **Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?**
  - ○ EPS has a department review every 5-7 years, but it does not cover the admissions process, and likely does not provide constructive DEI evaluations.
  - ○ Hiring has been reviewed by academic personnel office, the dean of PBSci

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- ○ Unclear if Ocean Sciences has an outside review of admissions
- ○ **Action Item:** Hire an outside consultant to review the hiring process ASAP, then continue an internal review every few years.

- ● **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]?**
  - ○ Some departments (Astronomy & Astrophysics) at UCSC do cohort hiring but not OS or EPS
  - ○ Faculty partner hires have happened within and between OS and EPS
  - ○ **Suggestion:** Faculty from OS and EPS discuss potential for cohort hiring to occur within and between departments of the division of PBSci.
  - ○ **Suggestion:** Consider a mentoring program for new faculty (OS department recently started a program for new graduate students)

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