



# Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

## URGE Deliverable Session 5: Breaking Down the Barriers to our Discipline

This is what was found by the University of Illinois at Chicago pod 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) statement<sup>1</sup> is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available<sup>2</sup>?**

Equal Employment Opportunity Statement – UIC provides example [Equal Opportunity Statements](#). A version of the statement is provided on all open, advertised Faculty and Staff searches. Postdoctoral level positions do not always require an open, advertised search. The Graduate College lists a [non-discrimination policy](#) on the graduate student application.

On our departmental website in the “About” section we have text about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, as well as a Land Acknowledgement. This might worth be putting on the main application page to indicate the level of weight we are giving this as a department; this could work as a banner or something that is pulled out to its own page.

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

We typically advertise faculty positions on our UIC employment website, organizations like Geological Society of America, American Geophysical Union, Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science, Minority Postdoc, and group listservs.

Postdoc and graduate student positions are typically advertised on personal websites, sent to group listservs, and/or advertised personally/individually at meetings.

As an additional note – all undergrads are encouraged to get involved in the department through undergraduate research, as peer leaders, and through our student club.

<sup>1</sup> R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, [blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples](http://blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples), (2017).

<sup>2</sup> <https://careers.who.edu/opportunities/diversity-inclusion/>

<sup>3</sup> K. Cobb, #GRExit Resources, <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13215461.v1>, (2020).

<sup>4</sup> J. Posselt, Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity, and Faculty Gatekeeping, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvjghw8s>, (2016).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.brandeis.edu/diversity/dei-recruitment-hiring/rubric-for-evaluating-diversity-statements.html>

<sup>6</sup> K. Griffin, J. Bennett, T. York, Leveraging Promising Practices, Washington DC: Aspire Alliance, (2020).

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

Job applicants require a CV, cover letter, a research statement, a teaching statement, a DEI statement, and names of three references. A DEI is a statement of diversity, equity, and inclusion about current JEDI challenges in the geosciences, how those challenges might be addressed, and if the applicant had specific ideas to address those challenges in the UIC EaES department. This will also be necessary for advancement for current hires (e.g. promotion to tenured).

Applicants for Masters and PhD are required to submit 3 letters of recommendation, preferably from professors familiar with the applicant's academic history. Applicants are required to have a GPA of at least 3.0 for their final 60 semester hours of coursework and to submit a Personal Statement. Applicants are also recommended to have 1 year each of coursework in chemistry, calculus, and physics (or 1 semester of physics and 1 semester of biology). No tests (e.g. GRE) are required. There is an application fees of ~\$80, as well as a language requirement test [e.g. TOEFL (\$180+) and IELTS (~\$250)] for foreign students, and a fee for the transfer transcripts into English.

Because higher education itself is rooted in structures of systemic racist and classist practices, no application process is without some barriers. With that, we have worked hard to improve our application process and to level the playing field by evaluating each candidate individually. In the future, we may work towards limiting the amount of information included in the first round of knowledge given to the general faculty, including not listing undergraduate institution or specific GPA (instead just including whether they meet the minimum requirement) in the first round of narrowing the candidate pool.

**How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric<sup>4,5</sup> public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?**

From our last meeting: MS and PhD applicants are evaluated by all faculty, with specific attention paid to the resources available to the applicant, as well as the alignment of the applicants research interests with a specific faculty member. There is no rubric, as applicants are evaluated qualitatively. Similarly, faculty applicants are evaluated qualitatively by the entire department including faculty as well as the graduate student body.

The most weight in the application process is given to the letters of recommendation and the personal statement of the applicants. One strategy going forward will be to have multiple professors evaluate the same qualities to ensure that qualified candidates do not get overlooked. Going forward, steps to decrease bias in the process may potentially be to remove individual names and remove the names of the individual's undergraduate institution.

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

For graduate student applicants, our entire faculty is involved in the selection committee. The decision for who to accept rests first with the potential advisor of the applicant, using advice from the rest of the faculty. Therefore, we do not remove applicant names during the evaluation. We have relatively few available positions each term (< 5 in any given year), so typically the positions are easily filled from our pool of top applicants. The selection process includes interviews with most of the faculty as well as the current graduate students, so the applicants meet the majority of the people in the department, excluding undergraduates.

For faculty positions, we typically form a committee of 4-5 faculty (approximately half of the current faculty including one faculty member from outside the department, all of which have undergone anti-bias training) who will meet to generate the advertisement, and lead the charge to distribute the advertisement. The committee will then review all the applications as a group, and discuss the applications giving equal time for discussion to each. Based on this discussion, a 'long list' is formed of the top candidates for whom letters of reference are requested. We may then seek preliminary remote interviews to narrow down which applicants we will place on a 'short list.' This 'short list' typically will consist of the top 4-5 candidates. At this time, we reach out to the remaining faculty who are not on the committee for input, and the final decision on who to invite for a full interview will be made. During the full interview, the candidate will meet with all the faculty, the teaching staff, graduate students, and department and college administrators. The full faculty then meets after the interviews to discuss each candidate in detail, weighing their strengths and weaknesses in the areas of research, teaching skills, and recently, DEI, before choosing a candidate to put forward as our top choice to the administration (who may or may not agree with our choice). Technically, the Department Head is the hiring manager and can make the final decision. However, the department operates democratically by simple majority rule.

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

At the Department level neither our hiring or admissions process has been evaluated by external consultants. We recently removed the GRE requirement for graduate student admissions, which was a departmental decision that did not need higher level approval. Aside from University HR and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences hiring or Graduate College admissions requirements, the department faculty would have to discuss and agree upon any changes in our current hiring and admissions processes.

**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”<sup>6</sup>?**

In AY19-20 and this academic year, UIC’s Office of Diversity has supported “Bridge-to-the-Faculty” cohort hiring across disciplines to increase the diversity of UIC’s faculty (<https://diversity.uic.edu/engagement/bridge-to-the-faculty/>). Departments compete for the positions via a proposal submission and evaluation process. Some years ago, a previous Chancellor entertained proposals for cluster hires of up to five faculty across departments in thematic areas. Some clusters were approved (but none in the natural sciences disciplines) and hires made, before the program was ended in the midst of tight budgets and change of chancellor. Partner hires are considered seriously across the campus in general. The bridge to faculty has a strong mentoring component, and there is a general mentoring component available for new faculty (maybe?). There is also a strong cohort component in hiring practices. There are also active partnering hiring in practice at UIC. There is a diversity and inclusion component for new faculty training. There is also a Faculty Mentoring program through the Office of the Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs and additional mentoring workshops for promotion and tenure.