
Hiring and/or Admissions Policies for University of Nevada, Reno

This is what was found by Erika Groh and Scott McCoy on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies at UNR, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve. We first examined graduate admissions and then faculty hiring and used the same template for each.

Graduate Admission to Department of Geological Sciences and Engineering at UNR

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?**
 - Admissions EEO Statements:
 - Non-discrimination statement – “NSHE and the University of Nevada, Reno, are committed to providing a place of work and learning free of discrimination on the basis of a person’s age (*40 or older*), disability, whether actual or perceived by others (including service-connected disabilities), gender (including pregnancy related conditions), military status or military obligations, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, national origin, race, color, or religion (protected classes). The University of Nevada, Reno does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any education program or activity that it operates. Non-discrimination on the basis of sex is mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 et seq.) and the corresponding implementation regulations (34 C.F.R. Part 106). The University’s commitment to nondiscrimination in its education programs and activities extends to applicants for admission and employment.” (<https://www.unr.edu/grad/admissions>)
 - Commitment to DEJ statement – “The Department of Geological Sciences and Engineering seeks to foster an environment where our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members at large feel valued and welcome within the department regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, nationality, veteran status, socio-economic status, political beliefs, physical or cognitive ability, and age.” (<https://www.unr.edu/geology/commitment-to-diversity>)

¹ R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eoo-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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- DGSE DEI Committee information is linked on the admissions page with information to reach out to them for ways to get involved or ideas (and presumably for questions related to DEI and admissions).
- **Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**
 - No formal mechanism for advertisement. Adverts to lists for funded projects do go out for work with an individual faculty member
 - Opportunity: how to cast a broader net? How to bring this more in line with faculty searches
 - Opportunities page- consolidate open positions and post on our website; add date on when these opportunities were posted; ask faculty that are no longer taking on students to note this on their website
 - Add people's research disciplines on the faculty page
 - Run a course on how the grad application "game" works
 - Convey important experiences - undergrad research what it is and how to get it
 - What is an MS/PhD and what doors open with such a degree
 - Nice example:
<https://geology.ucdavis.edu/students/careers>
Ask people to add this link to their syllabi
- **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?**
 - Requirements for graduate admissions:
(<https://www.unr.edu/geology/graduate/admissions-information>)
 - Letters of Recommendation (3) – letters coming from previous mentors or people that know the applicant well “certifying ability to perform graduate level work at the desired level.”
 - Personal Statement – 1-2 page written statement of interest outlining why UNR DGSE is the applicant's program of choice, why they want to pursue a graduate degree, career goals (optional), what faculty member they want to work with, and a description of “any prior research projects in which [they] played an active role.”; describe broader impacts, outreach activities
 - Transcripts – copies of official undergraduate transcripts (for which most schools require a fee for sending).
 - GRE Scores – no longer required for admissions.
 - TOEFL for international students
 - Potential barriers to admissions:



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- Fees for application and transcripts – is there funding available if a student cannot afford this? (Not apparent from the website)
 - The Graduate School has set aside a small amount of money for this, and Graduate Directors can submit a request to have an application fee waived. We were granted this for one student this year. It is not clear if this funding will be available in the future.
 - Faculty can work with the graduate school to pay student's UNR application fees
 - It is difficult for faculty to cover the fees students incur to order official transcripts. However, official transcripts are only required for formal admission, unofficial transcripts (which are typically provided for free) are acceptable for the initial application.
- Previous research experience strongly encouraged – could this be exclusionary?
 - If you do not have previous research experience, please explain why. For example, were there not research opportunities at your undergraduate institution, did you only recently develop an interest in pursuing academic research, etc.
- **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?**
 - Individual faculty members currently do their own evaluations. They individually are the gatekeepers.
 - Opportunities: Think carefully about initial informal prescreen of emails of interest.
 - Craft standard email of what faculty would like to receive to give fair opportunity for evaluation in the initial screening
 - How to change the model where everything rests on the faculty member?
 - Think carefully about perceived risks
 - Ask faculty to list what they are specifically looking for in graduate students on their UNR profile (and then update our grad admissions page to let students know to look at faculty's profiles). (I (Joel S) like the idea that we require faculty to do this in order to be considered for TA support, and I can volunteer to make an example for my research group and run it by the DEI Committee so we have an example for other faculty to consider when making their own).



Faculty hire to Department of Geological Sciences and Engineering at UNR

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?**
- **Faculty hiring EEO Statements:**
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- **Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?**
 - **A wide variety of listservs from faculty networks, professional societies, and societies targeted towards diversity as coordinated through our diversity office.** UNR requires that job advertisements are sent to a minimum of two external sites, with at least one that is considered a 'diversity publication/website' Generally, our faculty positions are posted on the GSA/AGU/AWG websites and faculty send out the advertisements to different geoscience subdiscipline listservs.

- **Requirements for faculty hire:**
 - Applications must be submitted online, <https://nshe.wd1.myworkdayjobs.com/UNR-external>, reference R0118637. Please include an application letter briefly addressing how your research and teaching experience meets the criteria set forth above, including your fit in our GE program and the department at large. A CV, Statement of Research Interests, Teaching Philosophy, Diversity Statement, and contact details for at least three references are required.

Example letter of reference request:

Dear Dr. (Name of reference)

(Candidate Name) has applied for our position as Associate/Assistant Professor in Geological Engineering. We offer BS, MS, and PhD degrees in Geology, Geophysics, Hydrogeology (interdisciplinary graduate program), and Geological Engineering (Geo-engineering PhD). The position requires the ability to teach courses within the GE curriculum which demonstrate the relationship between geology and engineering. The applicant should be able to fit into our department that combines geosciences and engineering. (Candidate Name) has listed you as a reference. We appreciate your assessment of (Candidate Name)'s research area, including the



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scope and significance and ability to obtain competitive external funding to support the research, their potential for growth as a scholar, and if known, their ability to teach courses at the undergraduate and graduate level in geological engineering.

Your letter will be most useful in our evaluation process if we receive it by_____.

Regards,

Name

- Once the search closes the search committee as detailed below evaluates the application based in part on a rubric, an example of which is pasted below, but also accessed on general 'fit' to the department in ways we have not been able to quantify. Approximately 10 candidates are then selected for recorded video interviews using the questions copied below. The search committee then watches those videos and meets again to select approximately four candidates for on-campus visits. The general structure of on-campus visit is copied below. Once the visits are complete department faculty vote. This vote has not used formal evaluation rubrics and is largely based on each faculty's own personal view of fit to the department and academic excellence.

Example rubric used in the initial evaluation of submitted materials for all candidates in the initial pool.

URGE

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Name:					
Institution:					
Qualified		Yes		No	
1	Has Ph.D. degree in appropriate field by start date	Y			
	Criterion	Yes	Maybe	No	Unable to judge
	Points	2	1	0	-1
2	Qualified for Assistant/Associate Professor level	2			
3	High standard of English exposition (oral & written)	2			
4	Specialty adds to strengths in GE /complements department strengths	0			
5	Adds diversity to faculty	0			
6	Can teach undergrad GE classes,	2			
7	Can develop GE grad classes in specialty	2			
8	Shows commitment to high-quality teaching/grad mentoring	2			
9	Potential research program in specialty	2			
10	Potential for international recognition	1			
11	Record of substantive publications	2			
12	Ability to attract external funding	1			
13	Has strong engineering background/degree/ PE	2			
14	Ability to work at the intersection of engineering and geology	2			
	Subtotals:	20	0	0	0
	Grand Total (of all subtotals):	20			
Comments:					

Questions for recorded interviews (via C-Virtual)

Department of Geological Sciences and Engineering

Please be concise with your answers; the recorded interview is limited to 30 minutes.

- 1) Why are you interested in an academic position at the University of Nevada-Reno?
- 2) Please tell us why your research is important and how you plan fund it?
- 3) How does your research blend earth science and engineering?
- 4) What major instrumentation or facilities do you need specifically on-campus versus using laboratories outside of UNR?
- 5) Please describe three classes you would be most excited to teach at UNR?



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- 6) Our student body is diverse. How do you plan to encourage and promote this diversity?
- 7) How do you see your self assisting with ABET accreditation activities?
- 8) If offered the position, when would you be able to start?
- 9) Is there anything that we did not cover on which you would like to comment?

General on-campus interview procedure

In total the interview will involve meetings including

- one-on-one meeting with our chair to get a departmental overview
- a standard full-length seminar-style research talk (45 minute talk, 15 minutes for questions) for a general department audience
- a separate research visions talk to paint us a picture of what your first five years at UNR would ideally look like in terms of broad research goals/questions, likely first 3 proposals and associated papers out the door to make progress towards those goals, ideal research group makeup, facilities and instrumentation needed to be successful, DEI interests achieved through your research, etc. (15 - 30 minutes talk, 15 - 30 minutes group discussion). In short, take this time as opportunity to help us get a better sense of the research program you are excited to build at UNR.
- Faculty discussion focused on your teaching interests in support of the accredited program and DEI goals in regards to the teaching side of things. Nothing really to prepare for this beyond getting a clear picture of which classes (new or existing) would bring you the greatest joy and how you might want to teach them.
- small-group faculty meetings
- one-on-one meetings with select faculty members
- group graduate student meeting
- a few meetings with administration (e.g., College Science Dean/Assistant Dean, Mackay career services coordinator)
- some casual hangout time or a virtual coffee hour
- optional virtual tour of campus/the department with a faculty member.

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

- The initial search committee is typically chaired by a senior member closest to the topical area of the search. The other 3 to 4 members commonly include other faculty members



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in the department of any rank that have the best expertise in evaluating potential candidates in the subject area closest to the search, with at least one member drawn from outside the department with complementary expertise. The department chair often serves as an unofficial non voting member of the committee.

- The primary responsibility of the search committee is to complete the initial downselect of the entire applicant pool for an initial video interview screening of approximately 10 candidates. The search committee then completes the next downselect to produce a list of candidates for on-campus interviews. Beyond that point, the search committee has no particular power besides being quite familiar with the applicants in the on-campus pool. Final decisions are made by an anonymous faculty vote in which every voting member has equal weight. The department recommendations are forwarded on to the Dean who has the final say in completes final negotiations with the candidate.
- Should we include an outside member with expertise in diversity and equity in hiring on all searches? Is there available funds to do this?

Should we include a graduate student on the search committee? UCSC does this and student's I've spoken with found this to be a really useful career experience, in addition to bringing more diversity of opinions/thought to the committee.

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

- As far as I'm aware you have never had an external party evaluate our hiring process. Beyond meeting basic university requirements, I'm aware of any official department level rules such that any changes would likely be easy to make upon approval by the voting faculty members in a faculty meeting.

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?

- At the university level there have been targeted cohort hires based on thematic areas and generally good dual career support/partner hiring at the Provost level. My feeling is that the other items in this list have seen little attention at either the University or departmental level.

Discussion:



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- We should consider making a specific rubric for each faculty hire. This could be the job of the search committee (the search committee makes a draft, sends it to the faculty, and revises it for the final product). This rubric could be used to craft the job statement (and could be posted with the job description) to make it clear how candidates will be evaluated. I think part of the problem with the rubric not being useful in the GE search is that we did not have the right questions/criteria on it. Rubrics should be used at all stages of the search where the pool of candidates is narrowed.

It would be helpful to get data on candidates who self-identify as a part of an underrepresented group so we can evaluate those applications with knowledge that these candidates have likely experienced systemic discrimination/racism.