

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



Hiring and/or Admissions Policies

This is what was found by the Marine Science Pod at the University of Southern Mississippi on Hiring and/or Admissions Policies, as well as what the pod would propose to change and improve.

- **What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?**

This statement is included in a current job ad: “As an Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity employer/Americans with Disabilities Act institution, The University of Southern Mississippi encourages minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities to apply.”
<https://usm.csod.com/ats/careersite/JobDetails.aspx?id=1742>

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

Job ads posted to USM jobs site

(<https://usm.csod.com/ats/careersite/search.aspx?site=1&c=usm>) are automatically posted at HigherEdJobs.com as well as Indeed.com. Usually the appointed search committee will also post the ad at relevant scientific society job boards (e.g., AGU, ASLO, IEEE, etc.) as well as any relevant listservs (e.g., EarthScienceJobs, OCB Newsletter, etc.). Additionally, the committee and others will share the ad with colleagues through email and social media. A similar strategy is often used for graduate student positions.

- **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?**

For graduate students, a personal statement, letters of recommendation and prior transcripts are required. The GRE requirement has been waived at the Graduate School level for 2020 and 2021 admissions due to COVID. Prior to the pandemic, I believe the Graduate School was letting programs waive or be blind to GRE score submissions on a program-by-program basis.

¹ R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eeo-statement-samples, (2017).

² <https://careers.who.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).



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

For faculty hiring, usually teaching and research statements, CV, and reference contact information are required. (usually references will only be requested for faculty making a first “short list”).

- **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?**

For Marine Science graduate students, there is a committee of 4 faculty that are required to evaluate all applications that come in. In an online system, the committee members can vote for the candidate as “admit”, “conditional admit” or “reject” based on their preparedness for the program. “Conditional admit” is usually used when the student does not meet a GPA standard. In this case, the student may not be eligible for an assistantship until their GPA improves to meet the criteria. In addition to the vote, a summary description of the faculty’s evaluation of the student can be posted for other faculty to see. All faculty can view and comment on each application. Once the admissions committee votes for either Admit or Conditional Admit, usually the student is not admitted until one faculty responds that they will commit to advising and funding the student.

For faculty members, our Associate Director will appoint a committee chair and usually 2 or 3 other committee members to lead evaluation of the applications that come in. To be on one of these search committees, each faculty is required to have recently taken training from Human Resources on the “Faculty Hiring Toolkit” (<https://www.usm.edu/provost/internalportal/faculty-hiring-toolkit.php>). This provides sample interview processes, the Nondiscrimination Policy, AA/EO considerations, and other information. Sample rubrics are provided for the committee to evaluate, but it is up to the committee chair exactly how this is done. The committee does have to provide some justification to HR for why certain applicants are not considered, asked for a first interview (i.e., phone or Zoom interview) or asked for a campus interview. The costs for the campus interviews are paid by the Division and are usually approved for up to 3 applicants initially. The first step of phone interviews will then be something like 5-10 people to select who they would like to invite for campus interviews. Once the campus interviews are completed, the vote for who to hire is put to the entire faculty and that recommendation will be sent to the Dean and Provost for final decision on hiring.

University does not have the PIs undergo any sort of DEI training for the hire. They do undergo a general “do’s and don’ts” training. University requires search committee members to undergo a general “dos and don’ts” training (e.g., protected categories) with is an hour-long seminar that covers overall hiring process and legal/illegal topics. No implicit bias training has yet occurred though there had been informal talks about it happening in our department a couple of years



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

ago. Our university has not yet mandated this training, though training may be given by University's EEO officer in HR if interested. Seems like it could be easily implemented here because it appears USM already has the capacity to provide implicit bias training through the EEO officer (#2 and 3 in Four Frames Model).

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

Depending on the position it may be entirely up to one person if you get the job or not (e.g., post-doc position or lab manager position); decision is up to one sole PI. For faculty positions and graduate student admissions, the members of the search committee and admissions committee are appointed by our Associate Director.

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

No, no outside consultants have been brought in to evaluate hiring/admissions process. Some standards are at university level and would have to be changed by the graduate school. Others can be specified at the department level (e.g., letter of intent) for admissions process. So our department could post something on our website about what the selection committees are looking for or what should go into a referee letter.

- **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?**

Our division has implemented faculty mentoring, and the latest version is that a new faculty will be assigned 2 mentors, one tenured faculty and one untenured faculty.

- **What was your experience like going through hiring and/or admissions, start to finish?**

We have some recommendations and suggestions for best practices for our department:

-RECOMMENDATION: Implicit Bias training for Faculty/Pis) One question we have is whether this happening at other departments. As far as we know, implicit bias training is not University-mandated.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

-**RECOMMENDATION**: Implicit bias training could also be provided outside of hiring practices to help with retention issues (#4 in Four Frames Model) --> Managing Culture. This type of training could also be implemented for recruiting/hiring grad students and staff.

- **RECOMMENDATION**: Permanently take GRE scores out of application process

-**RECOMMENDATION**: Have a best practices manual or toolkit for new faculty with information about grad applications, timeline of the applications and acceptance, and grad student acceptance rubrics.

-**RECOMMENDATION**: Diversity and Inclusion Statement should be included with application materials for TT-faculty searches and this service should be given weight in evaluation rubric

-**SUGGESTION**: Some institutions have a "how to apply to our university" training that seems to help, some applicants have little to almost no information about the application process. Could we make evaluation/selection criteria/rubric public?

-**Consideration**: Provide applicants and referees with what information to provide in their application materials? We understand there is no one correct way or correct set of criterion for all universities (no one size fits all)

-**Consideration**: Interview candidates for grad school? Would need to "standardize" the interview process; would need to put thought into interview evaluation criteria; also would need to make sure interview is just one piece of overall application as some applicants have more interview experience or some experience anxiety. Some grad students who were local were able to visit the department a number of times prior to making a decision whereas others were not local and could not visit. Have a set of prompts? Give a problem to assess problem-solving abilities?

-**Consideration**: Is there any way to implement this for post-doc hires? Standardized rubrics/interview questions? Our online hiring software has some automated tools for keeping track of candidates and you can give rationale for not hiring someone (generic automated response, liability). We could recommend giving "the ability to engage with and promote diversity a formal criterion upon which to make decision" some weight in the hiring process.