

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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

This is what was found by Vanderbilt AWG at Vanderbilt University 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) statement¹ is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available²?**

Vanderbilt provides the following statement for inclusion in job advertisements:

“Vanderbilt University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer. Women, minorities, people with disabilities and protected veterans are encouraged to apply.”

Information on equal opportunity and access can be found here:

https://www.vanderbilt.edu/eoa/compliance/eoo_statement.php#:~:text=%E2%80%9CVanderbilt%20University%20is%20committed%20to,veterans%20are%20encouraged%20to%20apply.%22

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

For job advertisements: Attempts are made to post job advertisements broadly. This includes posting on lists with geoscience organizations like AGU and GSA, and advertising to list-serves like Earth Science Women’s Network and discipline-specific list serves. Information is also spread by word of mouth and posted on the department website, and advertised via social media. We recognize that more work must be done to get the word out about open positions in order to build a more diverse and broader applicant pool.

For graduate admissions: Our department has been thinking deeply about how best to build a deeper applicant pool for our graduate admissions. We historically have had a presence at

¹ R. Kelley, 10 Samples of an Effective EEO Statement, blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/eoo-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).



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conferences (GSA and AGU) and had begun to also send groups to NABG and SACNAS to advertise our department. We are broadening our social media presence and improving our website to make opportunities known. We are also committing to having more open discussions among our faculty to empower faculty who are recruiting students in a given year to be able to advertise widely to generate a broader applicant pool for their 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 admissions: Our department has done away with the GRE as a requirement for admission, in perpetuity. Now, our application requires transcripts, a personal statement, a CV, and letters of recommendation. A fee was implemented a few years ago, and we immediately saw the detrimental effects. It limited the number of people applying and made faculty less likely to encourage applicants to apply given the recognized financial investment that applying involved. We have since managed to substantially reduce this fee from \$95 to \$20, which we hope lowers barriers to applying for many students. We recognize that this fee may still provide a barrier. We do not ask specific questions that we think are problematic.

For hiring: Applications involve teaching and research statements, a cover letter, and a CV, and a list of potential recommenders.

- **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 graduate admissions: Applications are first read by faculty in the sub-discipline that the applicant identifies as their primary interest. These faculty then produce an initial list of applicants in whom they are interested, and the rest of the faculty read all of these applications. Over two or three meetings with the full faculty, we discuss each applicant to determine those to whom we can make offers.

We have had discussions as a faculty about inclusivity and equity in our evaluations and how to recognize the diversity of opportunities available to our applicants and how to mitigate implicit bias. We still have growth that is necessary in this direction to improve the inclusivity of our admissions decisions.

For hiring: We have a small committee of discipline-specific faculty to read all applications and come to the full faculty with a list of applicants for whom we will request letters. Discussions



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from there proceed with the full faculty. We have not had a rubric in the past, but have discussed a series of criteria for searches prior to reading applications. We have also had faculty participate in implicit bias trainings before hiring meetings.

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

For graduate admissions: The goal is for a potential adviser to have multiple conversations with an applicant before a decision is made. The decision is made by the full faculty as to who we will extend offers to.

For hiring: The initial selection of a long-short list is up to a discipline-specific committee of 3-4 faculty, with the final decisions made by everyone on the faculty. The applicants should interact with all faculty by the end of the interview process.

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

No, but this is something we will look into.

- **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?**

We recognize that cohort hiring and/or admission would be a huge benefit for improving the diversity of our department and fostering the success of these hires/students. As a small faculty and small department, we are unsure of the potential for doing this, but will explore it further. We have had a history of partner-hires. We are in the process of revisiting our faculty mentoring programs for both tenure track and non-tenure track faculty.