

## Admissions and hiring in Wash U EEPS (formerly known as EPS)

Some basic info about how admissions and hiring are currently done:

- What EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) statement is included in a standard job or admissions advertisement? Are there other inclusion statements and resources publicly available?
  - **From most recent advertisement in our department:** Washington University in St. Louis is committed to the principles and practices of equal employment opportunity and especially encourages applications by those underrepresented in their academic fields. It is the University's policy to recruit, hire, train, and promote persons in all job titles without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, protected veteran status, disability, or genetic information. Diversity and Inclusion are core values at Washington University, and the strong candidate will demonstrate the ability to create inclusive classrooms and environments in which a diverse array of students can learn and thrive. Each year Washington University publishes a Safety and Security brochure that details what to do and whom to contact in an emergency. This report also publishes the federally required annual security and fire safety reports, containing campus crime and fire statistics as well as key university policies and procedures. You may access the Safety and Security brochure at (<https://police.wustl.edu/clery-reports-logs/>).
- Where are advertisements posted or sent? Are there other strategies for reaching applicants for hiring and/or admissions, e.g. job fairs, showcases?
  - Unclear if there is a list of places that all advertisements are posted or sent. The most recent job ad definitely appeared on the AGU job board and circulated on the ESWN email list; was probably in other places as well. This may depend on who is on the search committee.
- What are the requirements for an applicant, e.g. letters of recommendations, fees/test scores/grades? Is providing any of these a potential barrier that could be further lowered or removed? Are there any problematic questions asked?
  - I don't think the department requires GRE scores? This is noted in at least one place on the website but in another place (the "How to apply" page) the score reporting codes for Wash U and the department are listed. Elsewhere, those two pieces of information are right next to each other in case people feel like sending their scores.
  - There is an application fee with potential for a fee waiver
- How are applicants/applications evaluated? Is that process and/or rubric public? What kind of biases are introduced in this process and what strategies are used to address these, e.g. removing applicant names?
  - For admissions: process of evaluating candidates happens at the level of individual faculty; faculty come up with lists of students they want to admit, and these are brought to a committee and the numbers are somehow reconciled with how many the department as a whole can admit. In theory there is a ranking of all candidates somewhere but in practice that doesn't factor into decisions as much as individual faculty preference.

- There is no rubric :(
    - In our meeting we discussed the pros and cons of trying to build a rubric for grad admissions; general consensus was it would be difficult as different faculty members are looking for different things in a student (eg math background vs chemistry background)
  - For hiring there is also no rubric
- Who is on selection committees and who makes the final decisions? Who interacts with the applicants?
  - Note: chairs of hiring committees all across Wash U now take a training on DEI in hiring. Other committee members do not.
  - For grad student admissions, there is a committee involved at some point? Applicants interact with their potential supervisors and with current students both in that lab and across the department. There are specific events that are students and prospectives only, to make space for prospectives to ask questions away from faculty, though all of this happens during a visit (or virtual visit) period \*before\* admissions decisions are actually made, so there are perhaps incentives for prospectives to act excited about coming here and not ask too many prying questions.
- Has your hiring and/or admissions process been evaluated by outside consultants? What is the process for changing it?
  - It seems Wash U has some baseline standards for how hiring is done across the university (eg requiring committee chairs be trained on equitable hiring), but a lot of the decision-making comes down to departmental practices.
  - By extension, this suggests that changes to hiring practices can (up to a point) be made at the discretion of the department.

#### Some other thoughts from our pod discussion:

- Graduate student recruitment page should be updated/more detailed
  - More explicit information about how to apply (if contacting a faculty member in advance is effectively required for admission, list that on the site)
  - This is also important from a cost perspective, in that applicants shouldn't be paying fees for programs where their application won't be seriously considered because people don't have funding to admit them
  - Publishing info about which faculty are or are not currently looking for/able to accept students can be a big help, though applicants should also be aware that if they have external funding (fellowships, national programs) some faculty who are otherwise not looking for students may be willing or able to accept them.
  - Provide a checklist
  - Align essay/statement questions with what we're actually looking for; applicants don't know how to respond to open-ended questions and that's how you end up with a bunch of stories about childhood fascination with rocks, which are sweet but not very useful for admissions decisions.
  - Thinking critically about why you want a PhD before applying can be helpful

- Specifically, this shouldn't be presented as prospective grad students needing to question themselves or their ambitions, but rather as a useful opportunity for reflection and clarity of purpose. There is no one right answer (and in particular, the right answer is NOT always "to become a professor" as there are myriad other things one can do with an advanced degree), but writing a good application will probably be easier if you can articulate what you hope to get out of grad school.
- Rubrics for hiring/admissions?
  - Would require some amount of training on how to use rubrics and the potential for bias in evaluating candidates
  - For admissions, faculty are often looking for different things in students, so a single rubric might be tough to design
    - Equity checks that make faculty sit down and articulate why they want to admit particular students could be helpful
    - One catch that was noted in graduate admissions is that pre-tenure faculty are under pressure to supervise students who will be successful and productive right off the bat; this tends to select for relatively privileged students who had access to research opportunities as an undergrad. Fixing this would require some deep changes to the tenure evaluation system, which is almost definitely beyond our reach, but it's worth pointing out that efforts to diversify our grad student population could be helped if pre-tenure faculty got more credit for their mentoring work.
  - For hiring, look at examples here:
    - <https://advance.uncc.edu/programming/programs/faculty-recruitment/resources-search-committees-including-evaluation-rubrics>
      - Personally, I like the ones linked at rubric 3 and rubric 6 because they are highly specific
- Mentorship is very very important, and is linked with retention of minoritized students and faculty. Needing mentoring should not be seen as a negative; different types of mentoring are needed at different stages.
- How do we balance the need to diversify who we admit/hire with risk aversion?
- Similarly, what's the proper role for personal discretion/less quantifiable metrics in hiring and admissions? Can be useful in some situations, but far too often subjective criteria are just providing cover for bias and perpetuating an inequitable system that tends to reproduce itself.