

Draft plan for recruiting and supporting a more diverse faculty in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Prepared by the EESC DEI committee (Noah Snyder, Hilary Palevsky, Ethan Baxter), May 2021

Please provide comments and feedback on [our Jamboard](#).

Motivation

STEM fields in general and geoscience departments in particular have low representation of BIPOC at all levels, including undergraduate students, graduate students, and especially faculty (e.g., Estrada et al., 2016; Bernard and Cooperdock, 2018). This reflects a variety of factors, and racism and sexism embedded in STEM department cultures is important. This spring, several faculty members and graduate students from Earth and Environmental Sciences (EESC) Department participated in a remarkable 16-week program called [Unlearning Racism in Geosciences \(URGE\)](#). Four thousand Earth scientists participated in the curriculum of this NSF-sponsored program, underscoring the deep desire for change in our community. In the fall 2020 semester, the EESC faculty and student DEI committees conducted a survey of the department community and town hall during the fall semester 2020. From that process, recruiting and supporting historically underrepresented faculty members was identified as the most important department DEI priority area. This likely reflects the feeling that a diverse faculty will help educate and support a diverse student body, which is consistent with research (e.g., Griffin, 2020).

In this poster, we lay out a proposed plan for recruiting historically underrepresented faculty members. Our goal is to develop a clear, public-facing document that explains and demystifies the hiring process in our department. We want to make it clear that we want to bring in diverse voices in all stages of the process, and to support historically underrepresented faculty members and DEI work in our department. Our approach is based on the Institutional Model of faculty diversity (Figure 1) provided by Griffin (2020), in her book chapter called ["Institutional barriers, strategies, and benefits to increasing the representation of women and men of color in the professoriate."](#) This was built out of the NSF-funded APLU INCLUDES project.

The Institutional Model includes sections on recruitment, transition, and retention of diverse faculty. Over the next year, we plan to develop plans for each of these components. In this document, we present our draft plan for recruitment. We hope to be able to implement this plan during the hiring process of one or two positions during the 2021-22 academic year.



Figure 1. The institutional model of faculty diversity, from [Griffin \(2020\)](#).

Institutional Context

- Boston College has made diversifying the faculty an institutional priority. From a [BC News article in 2020](#):
Of the 49 full-time faculty members joining BC for the 2020-2021 academic year, 57 percent are women and 39 percent are AHANA (people of African, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American descent)—the highest such percentages in at least 15 years. The figures are not an aberration, administrators pointed out. Including 2020-2021, BC has hired the highest percentage of full-time AHANA faculty in University history four of the past five years: 35 percent in 2019-2020, 37 percent in 2017-2018, and 32 percent in 2016-2017; another high-water mark came in 2011-2012 (31 percent).
- Our department hopes to participate in this momentum, by being proactive about our approach to hiring BIPOC faculty, and by connecting to institutional resources, such as the Office of Institutional Diversity.

Recruitment

Ongoing outreach (before during and after the hiring process)

- EESC faculty members need to establish relationships with talented potential faculty candidates. We will do so by being present and proactive at professional conferences, disciplinary meetings, and research collaboration groups. We will also look to do this when we have opportunities to hire postdocs and visiting professors.
- The department lecture series is one important part of this. We make sure our weekly department lecture series includes a broad sample of diverse scientists, including BIPOC, gender identity, career stage, academic and non-academic career paths.

Hiring process

- Job descriptions
 - All descriptions for faculty positions in the EESC Department will include the following components:
 - A clear description of the position, including expectations for research, teaching and service. Lists of possible research interests will include areas that overlap with societal and justice themes if possible. Teaching expectations should include specific courses if that is appropriate.
 - A statement of the department's diversity values. For example: "Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are core values of our department. Our excellence can only be fully realized by faculty, students, and staff who share our commitment to these values. Successful candidates for our faculty positions will demonstrate evidence of a commitment to advancing equity and inclusion." (modified from UC Berkeley)
 - Requests for a cover letter, and statements of research interests, teaching philosophy, and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. We will request names of three references from each candidate.
 - BC's official text: "Boston College is a Jesuit, Catholic university that strives to integrate research excellence with a foundational commitment to formative liberal arts education. We encourage applications from candidates who are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive academic community. Boston College is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of any legally protected category including disability and protected veteran status. To learn more about how BC supports diversity and inclusion throughout the university, please visit the Office for Institutional Diversity at <http://www.bc.edu/offices/diversity>."
 - If we are approved for more than one search in a given year, we may combine both into a single advertisement. Cluster hiring has been shown to aid in building a diverse applicant pool (e.g., [Chilton, 2020](#))
 - Generally, we seek to write an advertisement that attracts as wide a variety of scientists as possible. Our philosophy has always been to "cast the net widely" and then rigorously evaluate the applications.

Advertising open positions

- Our searches will be active processes, department faculty members will seek out candidates via networking using all available tools (in-person, email, social media). We will also make ourselves available for informal meetings and formal interviews with prospective candidates at the [American Geophysical Union](#) and [Geological Society of America](#) conferences each fall.
- Our position descriptions will be posted with the following organizations: the [American Geophysical Union](#), the [Geological Society of America](#), the [Association for Women Geoscientists](#), the [National Association of Black Geoscientists](#), [Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Geosciences](#), [SACNAS](#), the [crowd-sourced Earth and Environmental Sciences job board](#), the [Earth Science Women's Network](#), and others.

Search committee

- Search committees will include three members of the department full-time faculty, and a member from a different department at BC. We will strive for as diverse a makeup as possible (in terms of race, gender identity, career stage and scientific discipline).
- Search committees will receive implicit bias refresher training from the BC Office of Institutional Diversity.
- Search committees will meet early in the recruitment process for clear and honest discussions of goals for the search. For instance, they will discuss questions like "what would a successful search look like?" and "what are our goals for diversifying the department faculty with this search?" Hopefully, this will bring to light and diminish the power of implicit and explicit biases that search committee members may be carrying.
- The committee should establish a clear timeline, likely pivoting around the AGU Fall Meeting, held each December.

Evaluating applications

- The search committee will read each application and evaluate each of the statements based on quantitative and qualitative rubrics. For example, for diversity statements we will use something like the one developed by the [UC Berkeley Office for Faculty Equity and Welfare](#).
- Based on this analysis, the committee will present a set of 10-20 top applicants to the full department faculty.
- The full faculty will then identify a "long list" of 8-15 candidates to ask for preliminary interviews, either in person at the AGU Fall Meeting in December or via Zoom. We will also request reference letters for these candidates.
- These interviews will be conducted with a scripted set of questions about research, teaching, service and DEI work.
- After this stage, the full department will meet and agree on a "short list" of 3 or 4 candidates to invite for on-campus interviews, typically in January or February.

On-campus interviews

- The on-campus interviews are crucial to set the tone for the department and university.
- Structure: We ask candidates to spend two days on campus. During this time they have one-on-one or small group meetings with all department faculty members, groups of students, the dean of the college. Typically, a group of 2-3 faculty members take the candidate to dinner after the first day of the interview.
- Presentations: We ask candidates to prepare and give two hour-long presentations during the two-day interview. These are attended by the whole department community (faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students). One of the talks focuses on research. The second talk should be a demonstration of the candidates' teaching abilities. Commonly, the teaching talk is about another aspect of research, but with the content geared towards an audience of sophomore-level majors. The teaching talk serves to emphasize the importance of undergraduate teaching is central to our department's mission.
- Student involvement: Nominate 1 or 2 graduate students to coordinate graduate and undergraduate student involvement in the interview process. This will include taking the candidates to a breakfast and a lunch with small groups. Typically the breakfast is organized by the Women in STEM or JEDI student groups. At the end of the interview stage, the student leaders convene a meeting and prepare a written report reflecting the range of student opinion on each candidate. If they wish, they can make a ranking or recommendation, which will be valued by the faculty during the decision making process.

Final decisions

- After the 3-4 interviews are completed, we convene a meeting of the full department faculty and the outside member of the search committee. Each person is invited to reflect on the impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the candidates. The written input from the students is considered carefully. We revisit the goals of the search and the original advertisement. Then, we make a decision of which candidates are qualified to receive an offer, and which is our first choice. Ideally, this is a consensus-driven process that arrives at a decision that all members of the department faculty support.

Yield

- The department chair and the dean of the college work together to prepare an offer to our top candidate. We strive to make this offer as competitive as possible in terms of compensation, benefits, relocation support, research start-up funds, teaching releases, and the like.
- Candidates are invited to visit the campus again to learn more about the department, the university, and the Boston area.
- Dual-career issues-- does BC have a policy?

Other useful resources

- UC Berkeley, [Support for Faculty Search Committees](#)
- Brandeis University, [Integrating DEI Processes and Practices](#)
- University of Washington, [Handbook of Best Practices for Faculty Searches](#)