

Hiring and Admissions Policies for LDEO, IRI, CIESIN, and DEES

The URGE Lamont pod consists of several organizations comprising many individual policies. This document summarizes those policies to the best of our ability.

Current Equal Employment Opportunity statements included in job and admission advertisements include:

- The Lamont community values diversity and inclusion and encourages applications from members of underrepresented minority groups.
- Columbia University is an Equal Opportunity Employer / Disability / Veteran
- Columbia University is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer. Minorities and Women are encouraged to apply.

Job advertisement postings:

- LDEO** By default, searches are posted on HERC Jobs. Additionally, search committees are strongly encouraged to post their advertisements in diverse venues, including social media, such as those listed in the document "[Advertising Venues to Promote Diverse Searches](#)". Searches are posted on at least 5 different sites.
- CIESIN** Jobs are posted on the project website, social media, LinkedIn, staff's personal/professional networks, and HERC. Further, CIESIN has a recruitment relationship with Lehman College (a minority-serving institution) as of 2020.
- IRI** IRI works closely with students from Climate and Society and SIPA where entry level positions are advertised in addition to CU HR advertisement. Positions are also advertised in partner networks depending on profiles/types of positions.

Applicant requirements:

- Grad** Letters of recommendation, personal statement, resume, unofficial transcripts, writing sample (sometimes), GRE (sometimes, this requirement has now officially been removed), TOEFL (for some applicants), fees (waiver available in some cases; there are a lot of support options available in particular to students in need but they are not obvious from the DEES website)
- Postdoc** This depends on the position type, see below for details.
- LARP** Cover letter, CV, research statement, letters of recommendation. Optional: Mentoring/Teaching statement. Short list: onsite or virtual interview (meeting with other faculty) and a research talk. Evidence of funding is requested.
- DEES faculty** Letters of recommendation, research statement, teaching statement, diversity statement, CV.
- Staff Associate** Letters of recommendation are not mandatory but considered a plus. No fee, no test scores. CV is mandatory, cover letter appreciated. (note that the process varies between research groups)
- ASR/RS** CV, letters of recommendation, research statement.

Applicant Evaluation:

- LDEO** Search committees are typically given aggregated information on the demographics of the applicant pool for the search, as well as a comparison with the national availability pool for that field using NSF-NORC data. Bias could be introduced because job descriptions are often written with a particular profile in mind (someone already known by the institution, potentially already working there under a different position). As a result, everyone applying is judged against that particular candidate.
- IRI** Process is not very transparent, further information is not publicly known.
- DEES** Search committees undergo training before viewing any applications. Guidelines require committee to spend the same amount of time reading each application, so evaluators are not just drawn to names they know

Selection Committees and LDEO and DEES:

- Guidelines and best practices are shared with all search committees and can be found here: <https://diversity.ldeo.columbia.edu/searches>. These include advertising venues for diverse searches, best practices, implicit bias, formation of a search committee, and an overview of the Columbia RAPS hiring process
- The LDEO Diversity Officer serves on all scientific search committees
- Wherever possible, the applicant pool is compared to the national data (provided by NSF-NORC) on the national pool, with respect to race and gender
- Following the selection of the final candidate, the search committee will prepare a search committee report indicating who the shortlisted candidates were, and why the selected candidate was chosen over the others in the shortlist.
- For postdocs, there are selection committees if the postdoc is being hired via a search. Not all postdocs are hired via searches, and this is allowable by Columbia policy. However, postdocs who are not hired via searches do not receive EOAA clearance, meaning that they cannot be appointed to a more advanced position at Lamont (such as say a promotion from a postdoc to an Associate Research Scientist)
- For postdoc searches, too, the search committee needs to provide a committee report explaining their choice of the selected candidate over the other candidates on the shortlist
- For the LDEO fellowship, the applicants (including their statement, letters, etc.) are open for ARS and above to view and comment on the Lamont internal password-protected website. In some previous years, postdocs were able to view these applications but this practice was discontinued.
- For Staff Associates, the searches are conducted at a divisional level rather than the Directorate level. However, search committees are encouraged to follow the same guidelines as other searches.
- For DEES graduate students, an admissions committee is appointed by the chair every year, with representation from all divisions at Lamont. They try to ensure that there is adequate breadth of fields to cover all possible applicants. The committee makes recommendations about who to admit and these names are submitted to GSAS who has final approval. Acceptance letters come from the chair of the department.

- For DEES faculty appointments the chair appoints the search committee specific to the field of the search following guidelines in the department by-laws and an EOAA approved document on search committee composition. Search committee members are required to undergo search-committee training, and are encouraged to follow the best practices guidelines outlined by the Provost's office: [Guide to Best Practices in Faculty Search and Hiring](#)
- While DEES is a part of Arts & Sciences and LDEO is its own unit, search committees at LDEO and DEES typically include a mix of people from both units, such as tenure/track faculty, Lamont Research Professors, Research Scientists

Evaluation of hiring & admissions processes by outside consultants:

- DEES has not engaged an external consultancy to review its hiring and admissions policies.
- As for all academic departments, DEES is evaluated periodically by an external review committee composed of senior faculty from peer institutions. Columbia University also conducts internal reviews.
- Approximately 15 years ago the Earth Institute received an NSF ADVANCE grant (Director and PI: Robin Bell) which was based at Lamont. This involved external review, which resulted in significant shifts in hiring and promotion policies that have since resulted in improvements in gender balance at LDEO and in DEES.

Processes for changing hiring & admissions processes:

- Most recent example for graduate student admissions: dropping the GRE, this decision was made in a faculty meeting, spurred by an online discussion. It was officially decided in a vote. No further procedures or approvals were necessary.

Leveraging Promising Practices:

LDEO Cluster hiring; New faculty mentoring where each newly hired assistant professor is paired with a 3-person mentoring committee to provide feedback throughout the pre-tenure career development; Peer mentoring; Near-peer mentoring

CIESIN Improve Transparency and Equity in Career Development; Improve Hiring Practices to Support DEIA Goals; Help Improve the Hiring Pipeline

IRI Improving recruitment efforts; Incorporate Diversity training; Incorporating mentoring using a 3-tiered approach consisting of: (1) the existing line-manager one-on-one mentor, (2) a peer or near-peer mentor network, (3) a distance mentor network

DEES Each graduate student is assigned an advisory committee of three people that is typically established by the primary advisor/mentor. It would be good to have it formally established that one person on your committee acts as someone that can help with more of the professional development mentoring piece. The graduate admissions committee could consider a more formal cohort admissions procedure which is not officially in place at this time.

Recent suggestions for improving the graduate application process to DEES:

- There was a lot of enthusiasm within the URGE Lamont discussions to work with other institutions towards the development of a common application for graduate admissions
- Such an application could build upon the thoughtful essay prompts used by the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Washington: <https://atmos.uw.edu/students/graduate-program/how-to-apply/#supplementalmaterials> and could include a short department-specific prompt asking applicants to describe why a specific program would be ideally suited for their career goals
- Action items to achieve this goal are: (a) consult with the current DEES Chair about changing application prompts (additional DEES committee discussion may be required), (b) coordinate with other interested graduate programs to agree upon a common set of application prompts
- There was additionally much enthusiasm for consolidating an annual list of Lamont research groups that actively recruiting graduate students onto the DEES website to make it easier for prospective students to know what options are available. Implementation of this change requires talking to the DEES Director of Academic Administration and Finance.

The Institutional Model of Faculty Diversity (Griffin, 2020). We have included this figure as a reminder to ourselves that changes in hiring practices alone cannot be the only solution to increasing DEI on our campus. Such changes must be complemented with additional measures to support success, such as professional development, an inclusive campus culture, and clear pathways for advance.

