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

Prepared by the ESE DEI committee (Noah Snyder, Hilary Palesky, Ethan Baxter), May 2021

Please provide comments and feedback on our Jambord.

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 we plan to address these in our program.

Motivation

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, 37 percent are women and 30 percent are African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American—higher than such percentages in at least 10 years. The figures are not an aberration, administrators point out. Including 2020-21, BC has hired the highest percentage of African American faculty in University history for five of the past five years, 37 percent in 2016-2017, 32 percent in 2015-2016, and another high-water mark came in 2011-2012 (31 percent).

We hope to continue 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 research (before and during and after the hiring process)

ESEC faculty members need to establish relationships with talented potential faculty candidates. We will do this by being present and participating in a diverse set of activities, including conferences, workshops, and other professional gatherings. We will use this time to learn about these candidates, and to make opportunities for and opportunities to meet with them.

Hiring process

Job descriptions

Job descriptions for faculty positions in the EESC Department will include the following sections:

- A clear description of the position, including expectations for research, teaching, and service.
- Lists of possible research interests and areas that overlap with societal and scientific topics.
- Teaching expectations should include specific courses if that is appropriate.
- A description of the department's diversity values. For example, "diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are core values of our institution. 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."

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 references from each candidate.

BC's official text: "Boston College is a Jesuit, Catholic university that strives to integrate research excellence with a commitment to educational diversity. Our departments and programs are characterized by a commitment to the educational values of our Jesuit heritage. Candidates are encouraged to reflect on these values. Successful candidates for our faculty positions will demonstrate evidence of a commitment to these values."

Evaluating applications

- The search committee will read each application and evaluate each of the statements based on the institutional context and criteria.
- 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 5-10 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.
- Based on the results of these interviews, the full department faculty will meet and agree on a "short list" of 3-4 candidates to invite for on-campus interviews, typically in January or February.

On-campus interviews

All candidates will be asked to prepare a 20-30 minute presentation during the on-campus visits. These talks are offered 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 candidate's 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 talks serve to emphasize the importance of undergraduate teaching central to our department’s mission.

- Student involvement: Nominate at least 2 graduate students to coordinate graduate and undergraduate student involvement in the interview process. This will include taking the candidate to a breakfast with graduate students, and a lunch with undergraduate students. We encourage the outside members of the search committee to connect with student groups. At the end of the interview, the student leaders can provide a letter report reflecting the range of student opinions on each candidate.

- Faculty interviews: We will interview each candidate for a full day. This interview will be attended by the whole department community (faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students). It will include a 20-30 minute talk on research, a talk on teaching, and one-on-one or small group meetings with all department faculty members, groups of students, and the outside member of the search committee. Each person is invited to reflect on the impressions they formed during the on-campus interviews. Then, we make a decision of which candidates are qualified to receive an offer, which is our first choice.

- 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.

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

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Figure 1. The institutional model of faculty diversity, from Griffin (2020).