



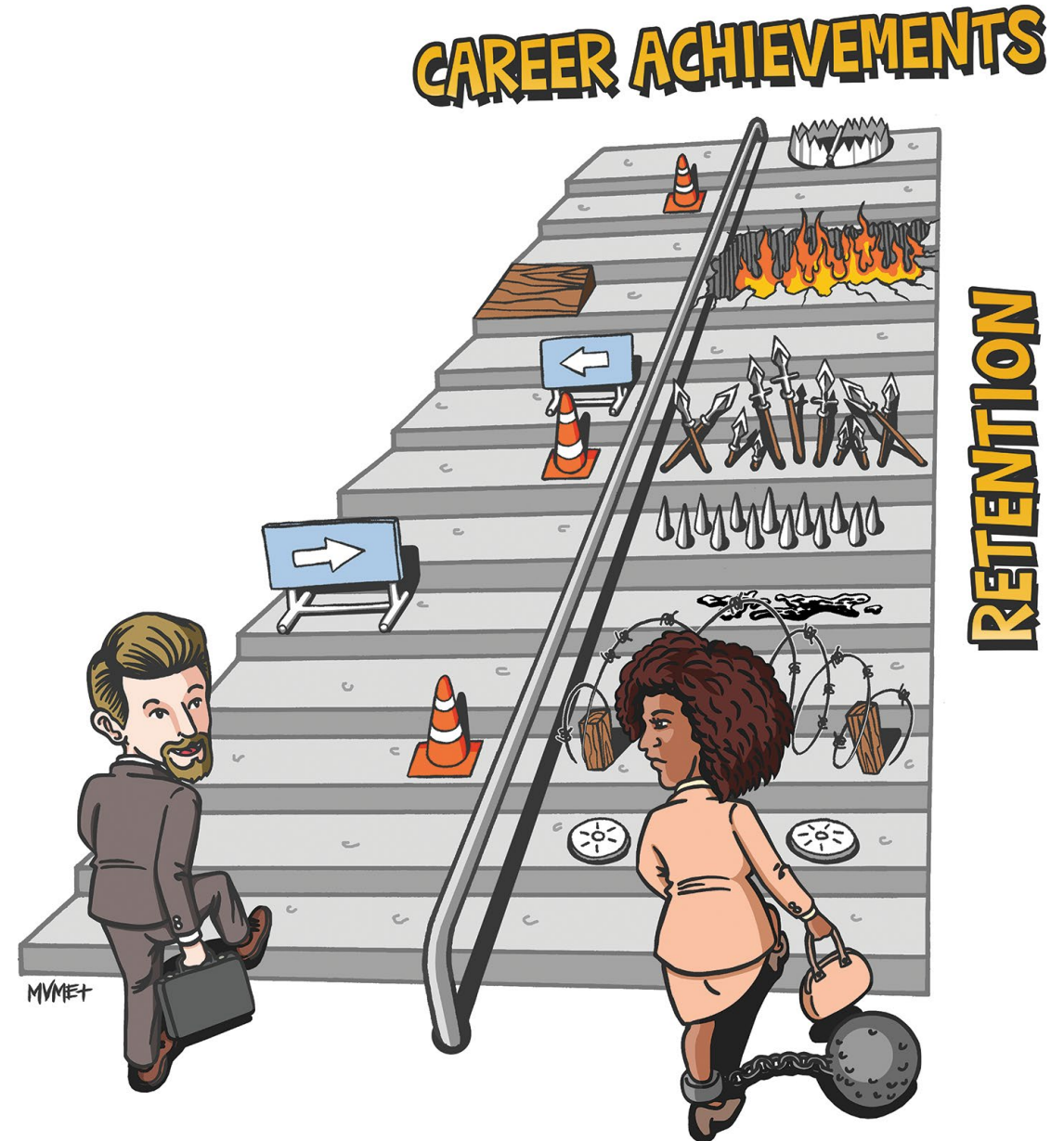
An empirical analysis of how geoscientists from underrepresented groups decide to accept or decline a faculty job offer

Margaret L. Duffy, Liza Y. Barnes, Christopher D. Wirz, Meghana Ranganathan, Mara A. Freilich, Lyssa M. Freese, Ellen Lalk, Julia Wilcots, Rohini Shivamoggi

mlduffy@ucar.edu

Motivation A hostile obstacle course means attrition of geoscientists from underrepresented groups

- Justice issue, in itself
- Can we promote climate justice without diverse geoscience professors?



Question What factors influenced geoscientists from underrepresented groups' decisions to accept or decline faculty job offers?

Methods

- We interviewed 19 participants who:
 - Are geoscientists,
 - Are a member of an underrepresented race and/or gender (i.e. not white, cisgendered men),
 - Declined an offer for a tenure-track faculty job in the US between 2016 and 2023, and
 - Were willing to participate in an interview
- Participants were recruited through affinity groups and institutions email lists and social media pages
- 9 tenure-track professors, 10 other geoscience positions
- 16 identify with a underrepresented gender, 6 identify with a underrepresented race

Strongest factors

- Geographic preferences
- Family and partner
- Institution's resources and fit
- Balance of research and teaching responsibilities
- On-campus interview experiences
- Institution's commitment to DEI
- Offer and negotiation
- Participant's personal identities
- Mentorship
- Institution's search process

Geographic preferences

“I valued feeling safe in the community. And I think that was lacking in a couple of the places [and] that push[ed] that onto the ‘no’ list for me.”

“I think the overarching state politics gave me pause at a couple of the places.”

Family and partner

“The location. My [partner] wanted to move to [this location]. I mean, [my partner’s] entire family on both sides [lives in this area].”

“I wouldn’t have taken any of these jobs if there hadn’t been an offer for my [partner].”

Institution's resources and fit

“It's resources like the ability to pay students and hire postdocs and really get my lab ramped up.”

Balance of research and teaching responsibilities

“The biggest draw to me here is that teaching is equally [as] valued [as the] research aspect.”

On-campus interview experiences

“Multiple senior faculty just no-showed their meetings with me. Like I went to their door and they weren’t there.”

“When I was at an interview, we went to [a meal and] I was one on one with an older professor who told me that the only reason I’ve made it so far in my career was how I looked. And made some not appropriate comments about being a [person of my identity] in science.”

“During one of the interviews I was asked my sexuality, my religion, if I was currently pregnant, and maybe if I was married. I like to believe that they were asking with good intentions, [...] but I was appalled.”

“I think seeing other people at dinner talk about their kids or their hobbies or how they balance their work-life like it was a very open topic. I think that was always very encouraging [and that it] showed that it was a topic which people were thinking about.”

Institution's commitment to DEI

“My current institution has the most diverse student population I’ve ever encountered and I really wanted to be in an institution that valued that.”

Offer and negotiation

“Money. Both offers offered me less than I was currently making per year as a postdoc.”

“Even though it was quite highly-ranked in [a] place that I wanted to go, it just expired.”

“One thing I wish that’d been better in the negotiation process for parents is, well, I didn’t know when to say I was a [parent]. [...] It turns out I could have negotiated childcare. [...]. And I didn’t want to say anything until an offer letter was signed. But then I missed out on being able to get [it].”

Participant's personal identities

“I looked very carefully at the demographics of departments I was applying to.”

“Politics and gender and race, for me, have limited where I'm willing to go.”

“It seems like they were really trying to hire a woman, which is great, but then you're put in that box.”

Mentorship

“Having a mentorship community and having people who care about you coming was way more important than the money to me. As long as you’re at at certain level.”

Institution's search process

Broad calls are “just for them to go fishing and see what they can catch.”

“I had some hesitation about applying because [...] I didn't want to put undue load on my reference writers at the application stage. That dissuaded me at some places. [...] I appreciate [...] that more and more they would only contact the referees right before [...] the in-person interview stage.”

Implied recommendations

- Fix underlying issues with department culture
 - including harassment and poor work-life balance
 - Support DEI initiatives
- Avoid inappropriate, disparaging, or inattentive behavior toward candidates during interviews
 - Avoid illegal questions
 - Use correct pronouns
 - Avoid tokenism
 - Avoid alcohol in interviews
- Have a transparent negotiation process and work with candidate's negotiation timelines
- Candidates were looking for enough salary to support their families (housing, childcare) and sufficient lab space for their research goals
- Find an exciting opportunity for the candidate's partner (if applicable)
- Clear and transparent help with visas for international faculty
- Strong mentorship for junior faculty, including mentorship in teaching
- Avoid broad searches
- Ask for reference letters late in the process

Summary

“There are going to be all these people who think I’m crazy for turning down a tenure-track faculty position.”

- We interviewed 19 geoscientists from underrepresented groups who have recently declined tenure track faculty jobs
- We identify the factors which influenced their decisions to decline the job
- We recommend departments reevaluate their hiring processes and department cultures