1. DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW
The School of Oceanography (SoO) at the University of Washington is the top-rated oceanography department globally (Academic Ranking of World Universities). Within the College of the Environment (CoE), SoO is composed of 35 faculty (22 actively-tenured); 38 affiliate faculty in collaborating institutions including the NOAA Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory and the University of Washington Applied Physics Laboratory; 53 graduate students; 102 undergraduate students; and 104 other professionals including postdoctoral researchers, and administrative and research staff. Our department is loosely divided into four broad categories of research: physical, chemical, biological oceanography, and marine geology and geophysics. Faculty and students are also involved in interdisciplinary programs such as the Program on Climate Change, the Astrobiology Program, and the e-Science Institute.

Participating as a partner in the AGU Bridge Program (AGU-BP) will contribute towards our ongoing efforts to recruit and support graduate students from underrepresented minorities (URMs) in oceanography. As a community, we believe it is our responsibility to provide an environment where all students can thrive as a diverse set of voices to collectively investigate fundamental scientific questions about the biology, physics, chemistry, and geology of the ocean. We are committed to being an AGU-BP partner that will provide students, accepted through the program, with the mentoring, support, and education that will enable them to thrive in graduate school.

2. FACULTY ENGAGEMENT
In addition to the student’s research advisor, four faculty members will mentor the AGU-BP fellows with roles outlined below. Each faculty advisor will meet quarterly with the AGU-BP fellows. Director of SoO Professor Rick Keil will discuss the student’s experiences with the SoO and any concerns they have with respect to mentoring and advising. Associate Director for Education and Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) Professor Evelyn Lessard will meet quarterly with the fellows to guide them through the PhD program processes and timeline. She will also track their course grades and check in mid-quarter during their first year to ensure support and interventions are provided when they will be most helpful. Chair of our Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Professor LuAnne Thompson will discuss the culture within SoO and help the students to connect to other AGU-BP students at UW and to student resources in the broader university. She will also meet quarterly with the AGU-BP students’ research advisors. Professor Andrea Ogston will be the primary contact for field oriented research, and will facilitate faculty-student discussion around diversity issues in field settings, guided by resources including the UW Respect and Equality in Field Work Initiative. This group of faculty also spans the disciplinary expertise of SoO and all of the listed faculty are experienced and successful graduate student mentors.

3. MENTORING ACTIVITIES
To build community among the graduate student body, each cohort year is assigned a common task. The first-year students host a monthly BBQ for the entire department, supported by discretionary funds. In winter, the second-year students organize TOASTER, an all-graduate student retreat, which facilitates
student connections across cohorts. Throughout the school year, the Academic and Recreational Graduate Oceanographers (ARGO) Student Club organizes events for our students, including talks, yoga and meditation workshops, book clubs, film festivals, and the Annual Oceanography Graduate and Postdoc Symposium. An electronic resource repository that includes students’ interests and areas of expertise is shared with every incoming student, providing access to community-based knowledge and opportunities to interact with the current graduate students. Beginning in the 2020-2021 academic year, ARGO will implement a peer mentoring program. With each incoming class, mentor groups are formed consisting of two mentees (first-year students) and two mentors (fourth-year students). Mentor groups will discuss challenges of graduate school, including navigating issues such as work-life balance and advisor relationships, and collaborate on Individual Development Plans.

The Graduate Opportunities and Minority Achievement Program (GO-MAP) within the UW Graduate School supports graduate students of color and organizes events focused on community building, skill building for graduate success, and professional development. Offerings include a summer social, a student orientation reception, and "Power Hours" focused on introspective and professional growth. At UW, the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) has an active graduate student group that also holds social and professional events.

We have an advising committee structure that encourages students to build relationships with multiple faculty and to meet with their full committee every six months. In addition, the faculty also meet within disciplinary groups twice a year to discuss each student. Faculty also discuss any mentoring challenges and collectively plan how to best serve each student, which may result in students being co-advised. This creates an environment where faculty are continually mentoring each other to become better advisors, with discussions focusing on problem solving and improvement.

The UW is a member of the NSF-funded California Alliance For Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) with the goal of advancing (URMs) to the professoriate. A graduate student from the SoO participated in the AGEP annual retreat in October 2019; Professor Thompson also served on two professional development panels at this retreat. This student also participated in the AGEP Research Exchange, visiting another institution to establish a research collaboration. The UW is a partner in the follow-on proposal currently under negotiation at NSF. SoO will leverage this partnership to support AGU-BP fellows.

4. ADMISSION PRACTICES
In spring 2020, SoO redesigned our graduate admissions practices in order to more equitably evaluate applicants using a holistic admission process. This new assessment process acknowledges that there are many ways applicants manifest their skills and knowledge, and aims to limit the influence of our unconscious biases and thus admit and recruit a more diverse pool of excellent graduate students.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are central focuses of this revised application process, which encompasses several improvements. Our application deadline has moved two months earlier to December 1. This earlier deadline will allow us to admit students prior to invited visits and a focus on recruitment rather than assessment at the visit. The application page now details what comprises a successful graduate application. Faculty are further encouraged to meet virtually with prospective students before applications are due. Additional aspects of the revised application process include:

A. The GRE is not required or accepted
B. Students may request an application fee waiver through the UW Graduate School; if they do not qualify for this waiver, they may request that SoO cover this fee.

C. Applicants are asked to describe their research interests. An optional personal statement encourages students to explain any circumstances that may have affected their academic studies and provide insight into how their background will add to the community of the school, including how their intended research and community involvement has the potential to increase diversity and equity in higher education.

D. We require students to attach a resume, and have provided an example template.

E. We encourage students to identify potential advisors in their application.

To evaluate student applications, two faculty members identified by the GPC review all of the applications within their disciplinary expertise using the new holistic admission rubric. This includes an evaluation of the student’s potential to contribute to diversity and inclusion goals. The rubric will be revised each year to ensure our admissions criteria reflect our departmental goals. Using the rubric, these reviewers will group applications into four tiers and to compare rankings. In case of disagreement on the tier, the GPC will act as a third reviewer. Students are then selected for an online interview based on the rubric evaluation. The interview is conducted by at least two faculty members who are asked to identify their perceptions of potential implicit biases in their colleagues’ assessments of the interview. Each applicant answers the same interview questions that are provided in advance. Faculty read applications and essays in full before the interview.

We provide travel funding for each accepted student to visit SoO during a shared visit period in February or March. During that visit, we share which faculty have funding for new students, and when possible, offer first year fellowships to admitted students so they have greater flexibility in selecting an advisor. Initial matching of student and mentor occurs after these conversations about funding and research interests. All admitted students are guaranteed six years of salary, benefits, and tuition through a Research or Teaching Assistantship; no student is required to teach in their first year. SoO provides a monthly stipend of $2,769 for pre-master's, $2,880 for post-master's and $2,978 for post general exam a month, year-round. SoO pays tuition and medical, dental, and vision insurance costs for each student. SoO continues to prioritize financial support to increase the diversity of our student body, and awards several fellowships to incoming students each year. This flexible funding can allow the student to complete any coursework at the undergraduate or graduate level that supports their success in the program, rotate through labs to find the best mentor and research fit, and explore professional development opportunities on the larger UW campus. An ARCS foundation award of an additional $17,500 over the first three years is often awarded to URM students.

5. ADVISING AND INDUCTION

Prior to arrival, new students are assigned to a peer mentor group and connected to two current graduate students to answer questions about moving to Seattle and joining SoO. Formal orientation activities prior to the fall term include a tour, two half day orientations to SoO and the College of the Environment, and presentation of SoO and UW student resources. These orientations include introductions to the Title IX office, graduate student union, and UW-wide Graduate Opportunities and Minority Achievement Program, and a comprehensive SoO student handbook. Following orientation, a two-day workshop, designed by graduate students, introduces critical skills and strategies for success in graduate school. Enrolled students with the SoO maintain a robust peer network and share housing opportunities via the oceanography graduate student email list and peer mentoring. At this time, the SoO is experiencing large
COVID-19 related budget cuts and cannot offer relocation assistance. We will revisit this once budgets stabilize.

In the fall term of the first year, all incoming students take a seminar class that provides practical guidance on advisor-advisee relationships and research ethics, and supervision in writing an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program or other fellowship proposal. If a deficiency in undergraduate preparation needs to ameliorated, during the first or second year the faculty advisor and GPC either suggest that the student take particular undergraduate courses, or organize one-on-one tutoring by a senior graduate student. Finally, students spend at least two quarters during their graduate career as a teaching assistant in order to gain instructional experience.

6. PROGRESS MONITORING

SoO graduate students establish relationships with their advisory committee within their first quarter of matriculating, and meet with this committee twice a year at the end of autumn and spring quarters. Initially this is a three member advisory committee. At the first meeting, the student reviews their plan for course work in the first year and discusses their research interests. The following spring meeting focuses on their research goals for the summer, and what course they would like to assist in teaching in their second year. Their first year course progress and grades are reviewed by the GPC. When students receive below a 3.0 in any course, the GPC reaches out to the student. Graduate students, their faculty advisors and other mentors, and their committees are encouraged to discuss student goals and regularly assess training and career preparation to meet those goals through a written document that the student provides to their committee before their semi-annual committee meeting. At those meetings, the student, in consultation with their committee, discuss recent activities and recalibrate near-term plans to advance their longer term development goals. The semi-annual faculty meetings on student progress in each sub-discipline (section 3) occur following all student committee meetings. Written committee feedback, emphasizing positive accomplishments and constructive criticism in place in the student’s file within the advising office. Students can request access to this file at any time. In lieu of a comprehensive exam, all students, except in exceptional circumstances, are expected to give a research presentation in the second year symposium that is held late in autumn quarter. In addition, most second or third year students give a presentation in a disciplinary seminar. This along with the required coursework allows each student to gain a non-thesis MS in Oceanography. Within 6 weeks of the MS presentation, the committee approves their continuation to the PhD. In practice, this has provided an opportunity for students who do not want to continue to a PhD to exit with a terminal MS. At the completion of the MS, students re-evaluate their research interests and plan their doctoral research. This may involve changing their faculty advisor. The general exam occurs during the third or fourth year and includes a dissertation proposal and presentation to the student’s advisory committee. The twice yearly committee meetings continue until PhD completion. Before each meeting, the student provides the committee with a written document summarizing their research and academic progress, presentations given, manuscripts in progress or submitted, and education outreach or professional development activities they have been involved in. In the fall and spring of a student’s first year, the advisory committee reviews student course performance. If a student is or risks earning less than a 3.0 in a 400- or 500-level course, the student is advised to repeat the course or take a related course recommended by the committee. To earn a PhD, students must maintain a 3.0 GPA, calculated on the basis of numerical grades in 400- and 500-level courses. If a student's grades fall below an average of 3.0, they are given a low scholarship warning and
must meet with the GPC to develop an individualized academic plan that may involve taking lower-level courses and tutoring by a faculty member or advanced graduate student.

7. DATA AND DEMOGRAPHICS
Over the last 25 years (1994-2019), 322 graduate students have enrolled in SoO, of which 85% were U.S. Citizens or permanent residents and 4% were URMs. Of the 269 past students, approximately 60% (160) completed a PhD, 31% (84) completed a MS, and 9% (25) left the program without a degree. Among the past American students, 3% (7) were URMs, of which 2 completed their PhD, 3 completed a MS, and 2 left the program without a degree. As of August 2020, 53 (46 American, 7 non-resident) students are enrolled in the department; 9% (1 African-American and 3 Hispanic-American) of the American students are URMs. For the 2019-2020 academic year, we received 171 applications, of which 124 were by Americans. Of the Americans, 7.5% (9) were URMs. The department offered admission to 15 students (12 Americans and 3 non-residents); 16.6% (2) of the admissions to Americans were to URM students. 4 students (2 White Americans and 2 non-residents) accepted offers.

Over the last 5 years, 13 students have left the program prior to completing a PhD. The reasons why students leave include personal or health reasons, to pursue employment that did not require a PhD, or to pursue a PhD in another department or at another institution. We acknowledge that interpersonal conflicts or lack of proper support or mentoring can also play a role, and we are actively working to improve conditions for all students in the department, for example by implementing the peer-mentoring program described above. Of all SoO PhDs, 28% are now faculty members at universities, 45% are in permanent or postdoctoral research positions, and 23% have transitioned to industry. For the MS graduates, 24% completed PhDs in other departments or universities.

8. EQUITY AND INCLUSION EFFORTS
The School of Oceanography is committed to improving the diversity of our department and transforming our departmental culture to be more inclusive and supportive of all members of our community. Our diversity, equity, and inclusion web page features the following statement: "The School of Oceanography is committed to cultivating an equitable and inclusive environment for all current and future members of the Oceanography community. We believe diversity is essential to achieving excellence in research and teaching, and thus we strive to create a community where people of all backgrounds feel welcome." This statement supports the University of Washington 2017-2021 goals to “cultivate an inclusive campus that attracts, retains, and graduates a diverse and excellent student body”. The SoO is developing its own Diversity Blueprint that is currently in draft form.

The faculty has engaged in recent discussions and actions around diversity issues. In the 2018 departmental faculty retreat, sessions focused on diversity and white privilege with an external speaker and discussion. In 2019, a SoO DEI Committee was established to reform graduate admissions and faculty hiring, and apply to programs such as AGU-BP. During Autumn quarter 2020, and in early 2020 the faculty trained on stemming microaggressions. We plan a workshop on mentoring with a focus on mentoring URM students led by the Associate Dean of the UW Graduate School. This discussion will be based on the new UW Graduate School Mentoring Guide for Faculty.

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