

2020 COVID-19 Recruitment Survey: Summary of Findings

Science Careers conducted an online survey of individuals involved in recruiting and hiring scientific personnel to learn more about how these individuals and their organizations were navigating the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and how it was affecting their recruiting and hiring plans.

This survey consisted of one set of questions for individuals in universities and academic institutions and another set of questions for individuals in other types of organizations that were not directly involved in education.

Approximately 34,500 individuals from the *Science* Careers and Wiley Madgex databases were invited to take this survey via a series of email messages. The survey was open from August 4 through September 7, 2020. During the period that the survey was fielded, a total of 174 surveys were submitted.

Demographics

A vast majority (96%) of the survey respondents were located in the United States (95%) or Canada (1%). The remaining 4% were in other countries.

Three-fourths (74%) of the respondents worked in universities or academic institutions. Fewer worked in nonprofit (10%), hospital or medical settings (7%), government (4%), industry or manufacturing (2%), and other types of organizations (3%).

Survey respondents most often interviewed candidates (78%), made hiring recommendations (65%), and screened resumes and CVs (62%). Fewer decided where to place ads (45%), made final hiring decisions (41%), and placed ads (30%).

Size of Organization

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the academic respondents worked in institutions with fewer than 10,000 students. Sixteen percent (16%) worked in institutions with 10,000 to 19,999 students. And 27% worked in institutions with 20,000 or more students.

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the non-academic respondents worked in organizations with fewer than 100 employees. Twenty-nine percent (29%) worked in organizations with 100 to 999 employees. The remaining 42% worked in organizations with 1,000 or more employees.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of the survey respondents were currently involved in hiring personnel for their group or organization. Thirty-nine percent (39%) were likely to be involved in hiring in the near future.

All Respondents: Biggest Staffing Challenges

Respondents biggest current staffing challenges were hiring freezes (55%), budget cuts (47%), and finding qualified candidates (43%). Staff working remotely (32%) and the remote interview process (21%) were challenges for fewer respondents.

Academic Respondents

Class Structures for Upcoming Term, Expected Student Enrollment

Almost four-fifths (78%) of the academic respondents expected the upcoming term to utilize some hybrid classes (in-person and online). Fifty-eight percent (58%) expected some classes to be completely online. Only 38% expected the upcoming term to utilize some entirely on-campus classes. The remaining 2% were in institutions that had not yet finalized the formats to be used for the upcoming term's classes.

Thirteen percent (13%) of these respondents thought they would have more new students than previously expected for the upcoming academic year due to the pandemic. Twenty-three percent (23%) expected to have the same number of new students as previously planned. The remaining 64% expected fewer students for the upcoming academic year.

Laboratory Research and Staffing

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the academic respondents were involved in laboratory research.

Seventeen percent (17%) of these respondents saw funding increases, 69% did not see any changes in funding, and 14% saw funding decreases related to the pandemic.

Four-fifths (80%) of these academic researchers had their labs shut down since the start of the pandemic. Only 4% of the academic respondents that had lab shutdowns had not yet reopened their labs. Seventy-one percent (71%) of these respondents' labs were now partially opened and 25% were fully opened (most practicing the new social distancing requirements in their labs).

Relatively few (6%) of these respondents expected to hire more staff than previously planned due to the pandemic. Thirty-six percent (36%) did not experience any changes in hiring plans. The remaining 58% expected to hire fewer staff than previously planned.

Institutional Activities: Layoffs and Hiring Freezes

Forty-five percent (45%) of the academic respondents were aware of layoffs in their institution. The group that was most often laid off in academic institutions was support staff (37%). Several other groups were cited less often: non-tenure track faculty (13%), teaching assistants (8%), career counselors (4%), and some tenure-track faculty (1%).

Eighty-five percent (85%) of the academic respondents worked at institutions that had a hiring freeze in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic: 26% were aware of hiring freezes for all positions in their institution and 59% were aware of hiring freezes for some positions in their institutions. The remaining 15% were not aware of any hiring freezes in their institution.

Of those respondents who were aware of hiring freezes at their institutions, only 2% expected these hiring freezes to be lifted in 2020. Eight percent (8%) expected their hiring freeze to be lifted in the first half of 2021 and 15% expected their hiring freeze to be lifted in the second half

of 2021. A majority (75%) of these respondents were not sure when such freezes would be lifted.

Hiring Plans: Second Half of 2020 vs. First Half of 2021

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the academic respondents thought it was likely that they would hire new staff or faculty in the second half of 2020: 11% thought it was very likely, 12% thought it was likely, and 15% thought it was somewhat likely. Almost one-half (47%) of these respondents thought that it was not at all likely. The remaining 15% were not sure.

Fifty-five percent (55%) of these respondents thought it was likely that they would hire new staff or faculty in the first half of 2021: 7% thought it was very likely, 11% thought it was likely, and 37% thought it was somewhat likely. Only 20% of these respondents thought that it was not at all likely. The remaining 25% were not sure.

Clearly, academic respondents were more optimistic about staff or faculty hiring plans for the first half of 2021 (with 55% being at least somewhat likely to hire) versus the second half of 2020 (with 38% being at least somewhat likely to hire).

Types of Positions To Be Filled, Recruitment Methods To Be Used

The types of positions that academic respondents were most likely to recruit for when things return to the new normal were faculty (55%) and postdocs, research assistants (33%). Several other types of positions were cited less often: librarians and staff (22%), laboratory technicians (20%), paid student interns (19%), and administrators (18%). Support staff (11%) and lab supervisors and managers (4%) were cited least often.

The most likely method to be used by the academic respondents to recruit personnel was the university's website (89%), followed by networking with colleagues (59%), general online job boards, such as Monster (43%), and scientific online job boards, such as ScienceCareers.org (41%). Ads in print journals (19%) and virtual career fairs (10%) were cited least often.

Branding or Awareness Raising Efforts

Ninety-six percent (96%) of the academic respondents worked in institutions that conducted or would possibly conduct branding or awareness campaigns: 61% had done so in the past, 49% were currently doing so, and 20% thought that they might do so in the future. The remaining 4% did not utilize or plan to utilize such campaigns.

Changes to the Interview Process

Regarding how the pandemic affected the interview process, 70% of the academic respondents now conducted most or all interviews virtually. Fifteen percent (15%) now conducted some interviews virtually. Eight percent (8%) did not change their interview process and 7% were not conducting any interviews at the time.

Non-Academic Respondents

Changes in Product Demand

Twenty percent (20%) of the non-academic respondents who worked in companies that sold products or services saw more demand for most or all of their products and services. Twenty percent (20%) worked in companies that saw little or no change in demand. And 60% worked in

companies that saw less demand for some (20%) or most/all of their products or services (40%).

Scientific Staff: Working Situations, Furloughs, and Layoffs

Scientific staff at these respondents' organizations were most often working from home (60%) and/or working in their organizations' facilities (58%). Relatively few non-academic organizations had scientific staff that had been furloughed (8%) or laid off (8%). The remaining 10% worked in organizations that did not have any scientific staff.

While there were only a few non-academic respondents who had seen layoffs in their organizations, 67% of these respondents had already begun recruiting to refill their open positions and the remaining 33% expected to begin recruiting for their open positions in the first half of 2021.

Hiring International Scientists

Twenty-seven percent (27%) of these respondents worked in organizations that had trouble hiring international scientists this year: 20% said that this was due to the pandemic and 7% said that this was due to other factors. Ten percent (10%) worked in organizations that had not had trouble hiring international scientists. The remaining 63% worked in companies that did not focus on hiring international scientists.

Hiring Plans: Second Half of 2020 vs. First Half of 2021

One-half (49%) of the non-academic respondents were likely to hire new scientific staff in 2020: 20% were very likely, 13% were likely, and 16% were somewhat likely to do so. The remaining 51% were not at all likely to hire new scientific staff this year.

Three-fourths (75%) of these non-academic respondents were likely to hire new scientific staff in the first half of 2021: 11% were very likely, 18% were likely, and 46% were somewhat likely to do so. The remaining 25% were not at all likely to hire new scientific staff in the first half of 2021.

Non-academic respondents were also more optimistic about staff or faculty hiring plans for the first half of 2021 (with 75% being at least somewhat likely to hire) versus the second half of 2020 (with 49% being at least somewhat likely to hire).

Recruitment Methods To Be Used

Non-academic respondents most often planned on using their organization's website (75%) and networking (68%) to recruit scientific staff when they were able to do so. Somewhat fewer respondents planned on using scientific online job boards, such as ScienceCareers.org (57%), and general online job boards, such as Monster (54%). Ads in print journals (21%) and virtual career fairs (11%) were cited least often.

Branding or Awareness Raising Efforts

Seventy-one percent (71%) of these respondents worked in institutions that conducted or would possibly conduct branding or awareness campaigns: 36% had done so in the past, 36% were currently doing so, and 13% thought that they might do so in the future. The remaining 29% did not utilize or plan to utilize such campaigns.

Changes to the Interview Process

Regarding how the pandemic has affected the interview process for non-academic respondents, 76% now conducted most or all interviews virtually and 14% now conducted some interviews virtually. Only 7% had not changed their interview process. The remaining 3% were not conducting interviews when this survey was being conducted.

All Respondents: Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

Importance of Diversity and Inclusion

Two-thirds (66%) of the survey respondents felt that diversity and inclusion (D&I) was very important to their hiring efforts. Twenty-eight percent (28%) felt that D&I was important and 5% felt that it was somewhat important. The remaining 1% felt that D&I was not at all important to their hiring efforts.

Funding for D&I Initiatives

Forty-five percent (45%) of the survey respondents felt that current events had negatively impacted their D&I recruiting programs.

More than one-half (53%) of the respondents' D&I recruitment initiatives were funded from their general recruitment budgets. Six percent (6%) had separate budgets for D&I initiatives and 6% said that it depended on the nature of the advertising effort. The remaining 35% did not have any D&I efforts underway.

How Science Careers Can Help Support D&I Efforts

Respondents were most interested in having *Science Careers* offer ways to specifically target minority communities or groups (82%). Fewer respondents were interested in special ad placements for employers with D&I initiatives, such as separate sections or enhanced listings (56%), or for *Science Careers* to help tell their story and provide opportunities to communicate the company's D&I initiatives (46%).

All Respondents: Recruitment Advertising Budgets

Recruitment advertising budgets were somewhat reduced as of the time that this survey was conducted compared to what was planned at the start of 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While many hiring activities were affected by the pandemic, it seems that recruitment advertising budgets were only slightly impacted. Rather than budgets being drastically reduced, recruiting and hiring activities appear to have been postponed.

About Us

Science Careers/AAAS

The non-profit American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), founded in 1848, is the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the *Science* family of journals. Its flagship—*Science*—has the largest paid circulation of any peer-reviewed general science journal in the world. *Science* also produces *Science Careers*, a free career resources website which includes a job board and myriad ways to connect employers with job seekers.

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