

Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering
Assignment as Instructor: Frequently Asked Questions
As of 13 June 2012

The following are some of the common questions asked by officers with an interest in teaching in the department. If your question is not included below, please contact the department personnel officer for clarification.

1. What is the format for the letter of intent?

There is no standard format for the letter, but here are a few basic guidelines.

- 1) It should be a letter (IAW AR 25-50) format addressed to COL Wiley C. Thompson, the Professor and Department Head, Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering.
- 2) As a minimum you should address the following:
 - Why you want to teach at USMA and in the department.
 - What teaching preference(s) you have: Human/Environmental Geography; Environmental Engineering and Environmental Science; or Geospatial Information Systems.
 - When you will be available to attend graduate school.
 - Special qualifications or experiences that make you a strong candidate.
- 3) Typical letters are 1 page in length.

2. What are the steps in the selection process?

Each fall, interested officers complete packets for review by the selection committee. Unless posted otherwise, the packets from potential candidates should be complete by December 1st of the current application year. Between 01 December of that year and mid-January of the following year, files are reviewed by all of the program directors and department head to select candidates. This process usually concludes at the end of January. Officers chosen by the committee are then notified by the personnel officer to determine the intent of the chosen officer. All other candidates are also notified that they were not chosen by the selection board. Packets are then sent to the AG on post and compiled, and all USMA requests are sent to HRC for final approval. In August (12 months before you begin graduate school), we receive final approval from HRC and then contact the officer about the graduate school application process. Selected candidates are then given guidance on where to apply to graduate schools and, once accepted, complete paperwork indicating where they would like to go school. The program directors and department head make the final decisions on where you are allowed to go to school. The final graduate school acceptance and approval takes place in the spring before you start school.

3. What is the minimum GPA required?

A GPA of over 3.0 is recommended, but not required. However, if you have a low GPA (2.5 – 2.7), you need to do very well on the GRE. The concern with a low GPA is the ability of getting accepted to a quality graduate program. A high GRE score will

overshadow undergraduate grades at most schools. Some schools only evaluate the last four semesters of work.

4. What should I score on the GRE?

The minimum required score is 500 Quantitative and Verbal and 4.0 on the Analytical Writing. Scores must be no more than 4 years old when applying to our department (to ensure they will be no older than 5 years when applying to graduate school the following year). The department head can request a waiver from HRC for a lower score. However, experience has shown that many schools will not accept a prospective student that does poorly on the GRE. The GRE is often a discriminator in our selection process.

5. What is the added commitment incurred for fully funded graduate program?

You are required to pay the Army back three days of service for every day at graduate school.

6. Do I have to be accepted to a graduate school as part of the application process?

No. Once selected and approved, you will be given guidance on where to apply. Each program in the department has a list they generally work from (see the Recommended Graduate Schools link on the Department Website). The schools represent the top graduate programs in the field and have a well-established reputation with our department. See the link on the assignment page for a list of schools.

7. How competitive is the process?

The number of candidates varies from year to year. In January 2012, there were over 200 files for Master's candidates and over 40 files for Ph.D. candidates. The number of available slots varies annually. In January 2012, four candidates were forwarded to HRC for Master's degrees and one for doctorates across the three programs.

8. Can I get another masters degree if I already have one?

Yes. The goal is to get the best-qualified instructors in the department, so it is imperative that your graduate degree matches the discipline you will be teaching. Additionally, the department goal is to have instructors teaching with an "immersed degree" at graduate school. However, it is possible to come here as a direct assignment if you have the appropriate degree.

9. Is there anything I can do to improve my chance of selection?

There is not one thing that stands out above another in the selection process. Typically, selected officers have a well-rounded file: a strong military file, superb academic record, good photo, and strong letters of intent. It is good to make your HRC branch representative aware of your intentions and get a feel for your timeline and potential future assignments. An expressed desire on your part sometimes helps in getting HRC approval. Finally, ensure you have a complete file at the deadline for your

desired selection timeline. Materials can and will be added to the file on a continuous basis, so it is recommended you post a majority of the material when you get it and then continue to build the file. You maintain your file.

10. Do copies of transcripts need to be sent directly to you or should I compile the entire packet prior to sending it?

For your application, you can upload copies of transcripts directly into WEST. The personnel officer will upload files sent to the department into your online file only if you have created a WEST file.

If selected, you will need transcripts sent directly to the department. Please send in only one submission if possible.

11. I am interested in graduate studies in Environmental Engineering, but my undergraduate degree is not in a technical field. Will I be competitive for selection?

Generally, faculty selected to pursue an engineering degree will have an ABET accredited undergraduate degree. An ABET accredited undergraduate degree or hard science (i.e., physics) is a requirement for many engineering graduate schools.

12. How do I send my information to you in order to complete my application packet?

As of 19 July 2007 we are using an online application system. Go to the Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering assignments page (<http://www.usma.edu/gene/SitePages/Prospective%20Faculty.aspx>) and click on the link to apply (<https://ams-external.usma.edu/apps/dean/inbound/interest/interest.cfm>). This link will take you to a USMA Interest Form which you will fill out and submit. We will review your interest form. Once approved (usually within 10 days) you will be given a Username and Password to the online application system. From that point you will be able to update your file by uploading .pdf, .jpg, .jpeg, or .gif copies of your records into the system. You can also update your basic information and review your file at any time. The personnel officer will upload any transcripts sent to us by universities and colleges. You will be able to see what the department has and has not received, and know what your file is missing.

13. I have a file with another department at USMA, do I need to send you one too?

Yes. Each department conducts its own selection process, so if you are competing in two different departments you need two files.

14. I graduated from the University of XXXXX, am I eligible to compete?

Yes!!! We value diversity in all of its forms, to include branch and commissioning source. You may bring a different perspective to the department.