Job search/application tips for Academia

**1.** Your job search should begin at least 1 year before the job will start.

2. When you are coming up on job search time, be on the look-out for interview seminars in your department – attend and see how it’s done. Take notes, what you liked, didn’t like. Ask you friends what they liked.

a. Start making notes for your seminar

**3.** Have rough drafts of you CV, research statement and teaching statement ready before you begin the job search.

4. Utilize your contacts and support network to help identify jobs that are a good fit

**5.** Written materials for your application

**a. CV**

i. Start working on your CV now

ii. CVs will vary slightly amongst different disciplines

1. Look at CVs from people in your field iii. CV is in third person

iv. The CV is a story of your academic life and shows your potential for future activity

**v.** Should be perfect – no typos and no mistakes!

**1.** Do not embellish anything. The only bad CV is an inaccurate one

**vi.** Get feedback on your CV from as many people as possible

**vii.** Your name and page number on each page

**b. Cover letter.**

**i.** Should be perfect – no typos, no grammatical errors

**ii.** Have several senior people read and edit it for you

**iii.** Should be tailored to that Department/College/University. Show a clear match!

Demonstrate what you will bring to that Department and why they need you!

**iv.** Demonstrate that you know their institution and what they are looking for

**c. Research statement**

**i.** Should match the job

**1.** Tenure track, clinical track, lectureship

**ii.** The research statement allows the committee to assess your areas of expertise, your ability to get grants, your academic ability, your compatibility with current faculty.

**d. Teaching statement e. Reference letters**

i. Pick the best references for that institution ii. Ask early and remind often – they are busy! iii. Give thank you gifts/notes

f. Don’t send things in the application they didn’t ask for – read the instructions!

g. What makes an application stand out i. Strong publication record

ii. History of successful grant applications iii. Innovative research/teaching plans

h. Send an email copy (as a pdf) and a hard copy (on nice paper, not folded!)

i. Check a few weeks later to make sure everything was received

ii. The contact person is usually an administrative assistant so don’t be scared to bother them!

**6.** Once you identify jobs and apply, continue doing research, writing and thinking…

**a.** Network

**b.** Practice your elevator pitch as much as possible

**c.** Submit abstracts and attend meetings to get your name out there

7. **Invitation** to interview

a. Usually 3-5 people are interviewed

i. An invitation to interview is a HUGE step!

b. The institution will pay for all travel, food and make all arrangements i. Do not offer to pay for any part of the interview!

c. Inform the individual that you are very excited for the opportunity to interview for this position

d. You will be asked to identify faculty to meet with during your interview

i. Pick people that will help you to decide if the department is a good fit for you

1. Other young assistant profs in the department

2. Potential collaborators in other departments

3. Graduate students in your area

4. If you are female, other female assistant professors in that department e. After you have been invited for an interview, your work is just beginning

8. **Preparation** before the interview a. Prepare, prepare, prepare

b. Go over potential questions

i. Make a list of questions from different interviewers and outline your answers

ii. Have mock interviews with senior faculty members the week or two before your interview

iii. Prepare to talk about your research, potential sources of funding, your goals, your teaching and yourself

c. Be able to suggest how you will fit in to that Department

d. Learn about people who will be there during your interview i. Names, interests, etc

e. Learn the faces/names of important people/department faculty – especially those on your itinerary (which you will receive ahead of time)

f. Over prepare for seminar – practice, practice, practice

i. Make sure you know exactly how long the seminar will run ii. Need plenty of time for questions

iii. The kiss of death is to run over time in an interview seminar

g. Pick you clothing so you look and feel great! Always be better dressed than those

interviewing you.

9. During **the interview**

a. The successful applicant shows they are likely to have very high impact during their career

b. The interview usually is over 2-3 days c. You may give several talks

i. Research talk/Seminar ii. Teach a class

iii. Chalk talk

d. You may meet with several large groups

i. The department/section

ii. Graduate students/professional students

iii. Undergraduate students

e. You will have several one on one interviews

i. Search chair, department chair, associate deans f. You will be in social situations

i. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, cocktails

1. Don’t drink too much!

g. You will never be alone (except in the bathroom!) from sunup to sundown (or later)

i. Always be ‘on’

ii. Don’t ever let them see you be tired or intimidated – you are the best person for this job with limitless energy and ability to move the Department forward!

**h. Seminar**

i. Some questions will be tough - during questions, don’t get defensive

1. I don’t think you’ve accounted for the research of Smith and Jones.

Aren’t you familiar with their model? I think it invalidates your main hypothesis.

2. Unpublished research in my lab show exactly the opposite effect. You

must not have done the proper controls

3. I believe a simple no linear equitation explains all your data. Why have you wasted your time on such a complex model?

4. How does this differ from the basic model that we teach in sophomore transport?

ii. Don’t give the sense of, “oh, woe is me, a poor grad student/post doc who was abused by my PI…” Rather, it was easy and you are excited about your work!

iii. Remember, many in the audience won’t be experts in your field!

1. Balance showing how smart you are and cool your ideas are with making it understandable for a diverse audience

iv. Clean slides, no typos!

v. Not too long!!

1. Leave plenty of time for questions.

2. A good seminar should have at least 15 minutes of questions (and this may be the most important part – how do you think on your feet?) and you want them to have plenty of time!

vi. Speak slowly, with eye contact. vii. Be dynamic!

viii. Your seminar should

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the overall problem and literature

2. **Don’t oversaturate with data!!!! Tell a nice story**.

3. Future directions is the second most important part!

a. You have such great ideas that funding will be a cake!

ix. Have a backup source of your presentation. Ask if you can see the room and check your presentation on their system when you arrive.

x. If you point with the pointer, point accurately

xi. Always begin with saying how happy you are to be there interviewing for this position.

i. Ask questions as much as possible

i. People will also be tired of interviewing you, so they will ask, “so what questions

do you have for me?”

1. Don’t answer you don’t have any questions – think of something/anything to ask!

a. Otherwise, you risk appearing disinterested in their work/the

Department

j. Be prepared to say the same things at least ten times… and say it with enthusiasm! As if it is the first time and the most exciting conversation you’ve had.

k. Connect with people/make yourself memorable. i.e. both like skiing in Utah l. Be honest, forthcoming and transparent

m. Remember people’s names (so study ahead of time!)… “when I met with Dr. So and So this morning, we talked about…”

i. This will impress people that you seem to understand/know the department already and will make you seem like a good fit

n. Emphasize the importance of the team – what is available here that will help you and what you will bring that will help them

o. Most important person to impress is the Department Chair

p. Don’t answer questions right away, think about it, then answer

q. Be willing to say, I don’t know, but I’m interested to find out

r. Keep you energy up – this is an exhausting process but don’t ever let them see you be tired!

s. Don’t leave without understanding i. The tenure process

1. If someone was denied tenure, why?

ii. The teaching load

iii. The quality of your potential colleagues

iv. Their expectations about research $$, generation of part of your salary and $$

support for grad students

v. Basic strategic directions of the department

vi. Find out before you leave when they will be making a decision

vii. A good question for you to ask, “If you could change anything about the department, what would it be?”

viii. Another, “What qualities would you like to see in the person hired to this position?”

10. After the interview

a. Take notes on the plane ride home – what was good, what was bad i. Both about the job – do you want it?

ii. And about your performance during the interview – what can you do during the

next interview better?

b. Send snail mail thank you letters?

11. When you get the offer

a. Know what assistant professors in your field are getting for salary, start-up etc…

b. Start with enthusiasm, i.e. “Thanks so much for asking me to be a part of your team. I

know my unique mix of skills will be a great benefit to the Department”

i. Usually will have a block of time before the next conversation

ii. Sometimes an official letter of offer will follow the first call prior to negotiation c. Negotiations

i. Make sure you take accurate notes during verbal negotiations

ii. Plan your negotiations ahead of time

1. Know what you need, what you want, and what would be nice to have

a. Don’t divulge what is most important to you (salary, startup, start date, grad students) immediately

b. Try to avoid negotiating in parts i.e. first do start-up and then salary, rather do them all at the same time

i. Having several points in negotiation going at the same time is in your favor. As soon as you agree to one point, you have lost ‘cards to play’

d. Things you can negotiate i. Decision date

ii. Salary

iii. Start-up package

iv. Teaching load and schedule v. Moving expenses

vi. Spousal hire vii. Starting date

viii. Postdocs/grad students/research assistants

ix. Computer resources

x. Travel funds and conference expenses

xi. After you come to an agreement, your ability to change anything in your letter of offer/appointment goes to nearly zero – Negotiate carefully and well!

e. You may be asked to prepare a budget for your start-up (do this ahead of time!)

i. Even if they don’t ask for it, knowing what you need will help you to negotiate for a start-up that will allow you to be successful!

f. The letter of offer

i. Usually is revised several times and many revisions are verbal

1. The Department Chair will say, “This is what I intend to put in the letter

of offer, does it sound ok?”

ii. The letter of offer will be the yardstick for tenure and promotion

1. Make sure you are happy with it! Much more difficult to instigate change after signed

g. Second visit

i. After you have verbally accepted the offer, but before the university has officially accepted your signed letter of offer

1. They pay for you and your spouse/significant other to visit

2. Opportunity for you to work out the final details a. i.e. support for a grad student, etc.

b. look for a place to live

c. meet with potential collaborators