Demystifying the Chalk Talk

This handout is a summary of a presentation given by Mike McManus.

Let's be clear...

- You can’t really accurately mimic an interview chalk-talk.
- Some places don’t even have a chalk-talk requirement.
- Some places have a power-point, overhead transparency, or chalk-board style chalk talk.
- Best to be prepared several forms and be ready for anything (although you should ask the chair of the search).

What is a chalk-talk?

- Think of it as an "updated graduate qualifier".
- The chalk-talk should be organized similar to an R01.
- You must be able to explain:
  - the significance
  - why your approach is the best
  - what are the alternate/back-up strategies

- The chalk-talk will include the members of the search committee, and potentially faculty from other departments.
  - It may be as few as 2-3 people or as large as an entire conference room.
  - It may be friendly, or it may be aggressive.
  - Practice diplomacy and suavity--it can be fun!

Way to be!

- Be cool and collegial.
- Be exceptionally clear in your voice. Use the right decibels, be lucid.
- Be confident but not arrogant.
- Be yourself! (unless of course you can’t be the above)

Take care of the body

- Get plenty of rest the night before: it’s true, sleep affects your memory, ability to remember names, etc.
- Sometimes there will be food there (but don’t expect to eat too much). Bring a power-bar or energy-snack.

Controlling the crowd

- Be aware of time:
  - try to direct questions in the right directions
  - be in control, move the discussion forward

- Excite those who are familiar with your field AND those who have no idea of your area
- Don’t get overly-complicated, make sure everyone appreciates the big picture.
- When all your proposed work is done, what is the 5-10 year vision?

Hope you can write legibly!
(and spell)

Good luck! :)

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