Planning your Academic Career

Interviewing for Faculty Positions & Preparing your Job Talk

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Three Goals

• Increase confidence in Interviewing for Faculty Positions

• Provide a strategy for interview prep and handling uncomfortable questions

• Offer guidelines for crafting and delivering an effective Job Talk
You have time travelled back in time 325 years

In one minute your cell phone is going to ring
You have 60 seconds to explain to your partner from three centuries ago what a cell phone is and how it works without being condemned to burn as a witch.

You may not say you are a messenger from God

You may not say you are Jesus or that your cell phone is a gift from Jesus
Would you burn your colleague at the stake?

Go to www.govote.at and use the code 414881

1. Grab your phone
2. Go to www.govote.at
3. Enter the code 414881 and vote!
Very few people are naturally effective or comfortable talking about themselves or their work in front of others, but ...
I do a lot of Mock Interviews

• Tell me about yourself

• Tell me about your research
Interviews are like Qualifying Exams

- They are inherently anxiety-inducing experiences.
- They require advance thought and preparation (math)
- The goal is to avoid the challenge of formulating your answer to a question at the same time you have to deliver it
Kinds of Questions

- You and your future plans
- Your research
- Your teaching interests + philosophy
- Other Contributions you might make
- Feared Questions
- Questions for them
Research Questions

– Walk us through the next 5 years in your research

– What funding sources do you expect to approach

– How would you include undergraduates in your research and how does it inform your teaching?

– Who in our department does similar research? Who do you envision collaborating with.
Teaching Questions

– Discuss your teaching style? (Use concrete examples)

– How do you engage students with different skill levels?

– How do you utilize new media in your teaching (Use concrete examples)?

– What other classes would you like to offer that are not already offered?
Feared/Illegal Questions

• Why did you take so long to finish?

• Why didn’t your PhD/Postdoc yield more publications?

• Is your husband willing to relocate if you are offered this position?

• Why are you leaving academia?
Other Common Questions

– How have you engaged students form a diverse background?

– Where do you envision your students getting jobs?

– What is your ideal balance between teaching and research?

– Why Arizona State?
Questions you might ask

- What kind of research support is provided for junior faculty?
- Typical Lab size
- Lab resources—shared facilities (NMR, Mass Spec, and Microscopy, can use instrumentation labs for research)
- How is it determined who teaches what?
- What % of students are engaged in research
Interviews are not like Qualifying Exams

• Rarely a correct answer. A literal interpretation and answer is often not helpful to them. Rather what is their concern and how can you best address it?

• Use their (or common) language to describe your experience (ME)

• Muster up some enthusiasm – econ history

• Do you come across as an engaging colleague?
On-Campus Interview: You will Meet

- Faculty/Colleagues
- Students
- Benefits/HR
- Lab Managers
- Deans

- Assume that none of them will be familiar with you and your work
- You’ll Never Know Who is Most Influential in the Decision
Strategies for Preparation

- Secret weapons:
  - Power of 3
  - Helical Approach
  - Practice
Phone/Skype Interviews

- Be prepared (e.g., 15 sec commercial)
- Use shorter, less complex sentences
- Pause to allow them to move on, but be prepared to fill silence
- Stay focused. It’s not a casual conversation
- Test drive your skype set-up (earbuds)
The average interview lasts 40 minutes. How long before a hiring manager typically decides...
• 33% know in the first 90 seconds

• Percentage eliminated because:
  – 67% failed to make eye contact
  – 55% carried themselves poorly
  – 38% applicants lacked confidence or didn’t smile
  – 33% showed bad posture or weak handshake

  – But I’m a PhD!

  – So What?!
Many of these same issues carry over to the Job Talk

- Except, the job talk is only…
- How many of you have attended Job Talks?
- How many of you have attended compelling Job Talks?
- I have a theory…
“The job talk is what will make or break your campus visit”

Professor Tim Lebestky
Williams College
Setting The Hook

• Just Because You’ve Spent All This Time on Your Topic Doesn’t Mean They Will Find it Worthy of Their Attention

• Don’t Start With a Laundry List

• They’re Leaning Back – How Do You Get Them to Lean Forward?

• What is the Surprise? What’s at Stake?

• Tell them a story (UNC)
Structuring the Talk

• Provide the Context

• Give them a Road Map

• General – Specific – General

• Praxis before Theory; plenty of examples

• Brief Review & Finish With Implications
Allude to Complexity, But Keep it Simple

• Assume Ignorance

• Making it Easy for Your Audience – Visual Learners

• Making it Easy for You

• Do You Want to Address Questions in the Midst of or at the End – Decide Ahead of Time
Use Evocative, But Not Clichéd Language

• How many of you have sat through student or peer presentations?

• We most easily learn something new by reference/comparison to what is already familiar

• Use Analogies, Metaphors, and Similes to Illustrate – RR

• Means/Ends – Statistics Don’t “Speak for Themselves.”
It’s About More Than Words

- 7 Percent Rule
- Make Eye Contact
- Text vs. Notes/PowerPoint/Winging It
- Written vs. Spoken Language
- Speak Slowly – Pause for Emphasis
- Time it Out
Before You Get There

• What kind of Job Talk
• What kind of AV equipment?
• Free time scheduled beforehand
AS YOU CAN CLEARLY SEE IN SLIDE 397...

GAAAAH!

“POWERPOINT” POISONING.
Using Power Point Effectively

• Don’t Use Distracting Fonts, Multiple Graphics, Transitions & Effects

• Don’t read everything on your PowerPoint slides. Your audience can read much faster than you can articulate the words & their minds will have time to wander away while you catch up - will they ever come back?

• Most people are visual, rather than verbal, learners

• Bring Transparencies with You (art)
Handouts

• Don’t Distribute a Printout of your Slides

• Something to Take Away
  – Not an Outline of the Talk but a Recitation of Key Points and Data
Display Confidence When Challenged

- You have Reasons and Evidence to Back Your Assertions
- Apparent Challenges are Often Requests for Clarification
- Re-State Their Objection in Your Own Words
- Address the Issues Raised – Take Them Through the Steps if Necessary
- Reasonable People Can Differ
Best Advice I Ever Received

- First 10 Minutes speaking to your audience
- Next 30 Minutes speaking to your colleagues
- After 40 minutes you’re just talking to yourself so stop shut up and let others engage
Best Advice I have to Offer

• Providence, RI is a boring place to grow up
Have a good closing slide. Why?

So your audience will know it's time to clap.
Alt/Tab