

***...what you really should
know about ...***

The Academic Interview

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So you have an interview... Now what?

- Preparing for interviewing process
 - What to expect
 - What to prepare
 - How to make this really count
- You will have a contact person, usually the chair of the search, of whom you can ask questions – don't be shy – **ASK!**



What is the goal of the interviewing department?

- To
- FIND,
- HIRE, and
- RETAIN an exceptional faculty member, one who meets or exceeds the department's expectations.

- It costs the department time and money to interview you so they have high expectations.



Interview at a Research Oriented University

- 1 1/2 - 2 days
- Meetings with:
 - Individual faculty (30 - 60 minutes each)
 - Dean of the College
 - Department Chair - prepare a rough budget
 - Students (sometimes)
- Seminars (by you!)
- Research
- Proposed research
- Meals
- Phone interviews?



Interview at a Primarily Undergraduate Institution

- Telephone Interview:
 - 3-5 faculty members
 - Screening process
- On-site Interview
 - Meetings with:
 - Individual faculty (30 - 60 minutes each)
 - Dean of the College
 - Department Chair - prepare a rough budget
 - Students (often)
- Presentations
 - Research/Proposed research
 - Teach a course



Before you go...

- Review your interview itinerary
 - Request a schedule so that you can prepare
 - Review directions, travel arrangements
 - Watch the weather
 - Don't be late! / Allow for delays
- Do your homework - find out about the department
- Review material before the interview
- and the night before...



Get a good night's sleep



Preparing your presentations

- The “what I’ve been doing” talk
- The “what I’m going to do” talk

- And, at a primarily undergraduate institution, The “I’ll be a fabulous teacher” opportunity

- Know your audience in ALL cases, and,
- Practice, practice practice!
- The more polished, the better



Preparing your presentations

- Nuts and bolts of the presentation
 - Know what they are expecting
 - Chalk talk
 - Overheads/slides
 - **PowerPoint**
- Know how long they expect you to talk
- Know what media are available
- If you are not sure – ASK!!



Introductions set the tone

- Begin your meetings with a firm handshake, make eye contact
- Be enthusiastic, smile but no cheerleaders please
- Show respect
- Break the ice
- Always tell the truth



Presenting your work

- This is your opportunity to show them that you are already an accomplished scientist
- Find out who your audience will be and gear the presentation to them
- Find out how much time you have - prepare extra material in case you “talk too fast”
- Make your presentation interesting - a boring seminar will not attract a job
- Know your material inside out
- but most important... ***Practice, Practice, Practice.***



Research Presentation - Questions to ponder

- “What is the first experiment that you will do?” (do you really know what you are doing?)
- “Where do you see your research in 5 (10) years?” (will you have success with sustained research?)
- “How is this different from what you did as a graduate student or postdoc?” (is this really your idea?)
- “How do you justify this budget?” (why should we give YOU all this money?)
- “Who will support this research?” (have you thought about funding opportunities?)
- “If money were no object, what experiments would you pursue?” (show us your creativity)
- “What classes do you want to teach” (how will you impact the quality of education and teaching load of others here?)
- “What new teaching ideas do you have? (how will you enhance our teaching?)



Questions, questions, questions...

- Anticipate questions that you will get asked...
- What are you seeking in this job?
- Why do you want to join our faculty?
- What funding agencies might be interested in paying for this research?
- What kind of budget will you need?
- What is the first experiment that you will do?
- What questions can I answer for you?



And can I answer any questions for you?

- Develop questions to ask - tailor your questions to the institution
- What do you like best about this department?
- How does this department compare to others on campus?
- How does this department support its junior faculty? Mentoring?
- Are there funding opportunities through the university?
- Will I be nominated for early career awards (Dreyfus, etc.)?



And can I answer any questions for you?

- For a research oriented institution:
- How many graduate students do you normally get in a year?
- Where do most of your graduate students come from?
- Where do most of your graduate students get jobs?
- What companies do recruiting in your department?
- Are there opportunities for junior faculty to get release from teaching prior to tenure?



Those nasty, nosy, illegal questions

- Any question that probes
 - Race
 - Sex
 - Age
 - National origin
 - Religion
- Questions about other job interviews
- Rarely intentional - they just come up
- Be polite, shift focus if possible
- Do not feel obligated to answer
- Do not try to make your interviewer feel uncomfortable
- Ask the interviewer to explain the relevance
- Anticipate inappropriate questions and think of some appropriate answers before your interview



How they might ask “those” questions

- Is there anything else that you think we should know?
- Can we tell you anything else about the position?
- Is there anything that we can do to enhance this position for you?
- This kind of question is your opening to provide personal information – IF YOU WANT – to the interviewer. This is completely voluntary!



What your mother would tell you

- Appropriate clothing
- Appropriate hairstyle - neat and well groomed
- Minimize cologne, perfume, or aftershave
- Minimal jewelry - nothing gaudy or unusual
- Be sure to be comfortable
- Good personal hygiene

- Your appearance will make the first impression



• ***Now is not the time to be***

Dress for success - Men

- Wear a suit and tie - sport coat is ok
- Get your shirts professionally cleaned (they will stay pressed for longer and survive your luggage better)
- Polish and shine your shoes
- Your socks should match your pants - no loud patterns
- Trim facial hair
- Minimize jewelry - especially earrings or other piercings



Dress for success - Women

- Be conservative, but not dowdy
- Pants ok - should be professional
- Skirt length neither too short nor too long
 - full length is as inappropriate as a mini skirt
- Minimize jewelry
 - especially avoid dangles and jangles
- Hair should be easily managed and should not distract
- Minimal, tasteful makeup
- Wear comfortable shoes - pumps (heels <2.5”)



What your mother would tell you

- Meals are part of the interview
- Use your “company manners”
 - no elbows please
 - do not slouch, but sit comfortably
 - do not talk with your mouth full
- Napkins are for laps - use yours
- Know which fork to use
- Avoid messy foods
- Avoid alcohol - especially at lunch
 - one drink (e.g., a glass of wine, a beer) is fine with dinner
- Do not attempt to pay the bill



What your mother would tell you

- Have good personal hygiene
 - Bathe every day
 - Wear deodorant
 - Brush and floss your teeth
 - Carry and use breath mints
 - Your clothes should be fresh and clean
- Be prepared
 - Pack extra socks, underwear, stockings...
 - Pack an umbrella and a suitable coat



Remember, you do not get a second chance

- The interview is your opportunity to convince others that they should hire you.
- They will:
 - Try to determine if you are qualified for the position.
 - See if you fit into the department.
- It is also your opportunity to see if you would want a job in that department at that institution



Post Interview

- Submit your expenses promptly
- Send thank you letters/emails to any and all persons directly involved in your interview
 - Your Host
 - Department Chair
 - Other faculty interested in your research
- Follow-up letters/emails
 - Clarify points for yourself and them
 - Find out about timing for decisions



The interview

- The application gets you the interview...
- The interview can get you the job
- Even the strongest packages can be destroyed by a weak interview
- Everyone has a chance - you want to maximize yours

