

General Comments

1. Application process

No gimmicks!

Your vita and your cover letter function as an abstract in most of the selection process. Research statement provides quasi-abstracts of your current (past), and future research. Teaching statement matters most in liberal arts colleges. In research depts. no one wants to know your teaching philosophy. They want to know that you will be a competent teacher who doesn't create hassles for the chair, turns in your grades on time, doesn't introduce your religious beliefs into your teaching, doesn't behave in ways that make the institution vulnerable to sexual harassment charges, and don't in other ways generate complaints

What do departments look for on a vita

- a. positive: follow through (e.g., meeting papers → submissions → acceptances)
- b. negative: padding

Where to apply:

- a. Big denominator
- b. but don't apply to places that there's no chance at all you would go to.

2. Selection process at a research-oriented department

College authorizes a search

Department selects areas to advertise (probably lack of consensus within dept)

Department chair appoints search committee (may or may not have student rep)

May be as many of 300 applications, so search committee often splits into two subcommittees and each go through only half on the first round. They will go through all applications fairly cursorily—probably will not read anything but your cv, your recommendations, and maybe your application letter—and usually sorts applications into 3 unequal sized categories: REJECT, HOLD and CONSIDER MORE FULLY.

[Because search committees do read recommendation letters, make sure that your referees get their letters in.]

This is a crude sorting process involving lots of idiosyncratic judgments. And hence there's a big error term. Professor G might think that the work of your mentor is poorly trained and hence discount all your mentor's students and by chance alone crap, he might put your application in REJECT.

When the subcommittees are done, they go through every applicant. If there are two REJECTS, you're out. But if the other member is very positive, you'll likely end up in hold.

Two positive votes or one positive vote by a persuasive or influential committee member can get you into the CONSIDER MORE FULLY. My guess is that there are in the neighborhood of 30-40 files in this category. Some depts may ask for writing samples at this point, and you need to be ready to send them if you haven't already. At this stage, all the committee members will "read" all these files, rating them in some way. In reality this means that everyone will look closely at your CV and recommendations, they will read your cover letter all the way through if it is not excessively long and

boring, and if you sound promising they will then read your research statement. My guess is that the graduate student member of the committee will read your teaching statement. Not very many committee members is likely to read a writing sample unless they are particularly interested in what you're doing because it overlaps with their interests.

When everyone is done, the committee will meet again and try to move as many files as they can to the REJECT or HOLD categories. The goal is to end up with a short list of 3-4 people to invite for interviews, plus another 5-6 people as fallbacks. Once this decision is made, the dept. will contact you very quickly to invite you for an interview. Your file (including your writing samples) will be made available in the dept. and probably your CV circulated to all the faculty.

It is altogether possible for you to be invited for an interview without anyone having read any of your publications or unpublished papers, and for much of the faculty to not have any idea who you are.

Faculty who weren't involved in the search committee make up their minds largely on the basis of your job talk and any one-on-one interaction they have with you. Because the job talk is so important, we might have to have a separate session on this.

3. Going on an interview

Increasingly departments precede real interview with phone interview

Be ready when the call comes

In person interview: their chance to look you over, but your chance to gather information you'll need to make a decision

- You are checking them out, too. Important characteristics differ across institutions, so you can't generalize from UW re things they offer or don't offer. If you are in a position to make choices between offers, you will want to have comparative impressions across your options..
- Decide ahead of time what you really need to know about the place. If you want a job where you will have time for research, you need to know the extent of committee demands and teaching demands. You may want to maximize on research, not prestige or location. It is not much fun to be the only assistant professor in the department. Or the last one hired for several years. Being an assistant professor is harder without a support group.

2. Have fun!

- Enjoy the opportunity to learn about another place. Take advantage of the rare opportunity to talk to people who are truly interested in your research (and to learn about theirs).
- If you appear to be having fun, especially when you're talking about your research, people are likely to infer that you will be an upbeat colleague and teacher

3. Nitty gritty

- Familiarize yourself with the department before you go. It's arrogant not to. The ASA's Guide to Graduate Departments is useful, as is the Internet, which will let

you see faculty publications in the last three or four years. Read the abstracts of some of their articles. Besides providing things to talk about, this shows that you're a sociologically "cosmopolitan"

- Be familiar with the names of all the faculty
- Be familiar with articles published in the last several issues of ASR, AJS and SF (and other journals in your specialty area)
- Find the department's rating, using the NRC. Look at its previous rating to see if it has changed.
- Look at Department directories for the last few years to see if faculty have been leaving—you can ask about why they left and where they went.
- See list of questions to ask on your interview

4. power relationship changes between you and potential employer changes over time

- By the time someone invites you for an interview, you've made a very difficult cut. There is some consensus in the search committee that they think you're good; indeed, their credibility is at stake. This shifts the balance of power somewhat, so you don't have to be incredibly subordinate. So, **within reason**,
- You can negotiate how quickly come. They will want you to come right away, and you are likely to want a little time to find stuff to wear, give a practice talk, find a cat sitter, etc. You may be able to hold off for a week more than they want, but don't do it unless you really need to.
- As for the timing of your visit vis-à-vis other candidates, it's not clear what is most desirable, since a **primacy effect** could be in play (in which the first person makes more of an impression) or a **recency effect** (in which the last person is more memorable). Faculty get worn out towards the end of recruiting, so going first might help, if you have a choice.
- And be aware that interviews during the winter can get cancelled if flights get cancelled.
- You don't need to take the cheapest flight if it's terribly inconvenient, for example.
- Come into town the afternoon before, if possible. You will get information in the night-before dinner. This will make you feel more in control.
- Ahead of time pick people you want to meet there and ask if you can see them. You can even meet people in other departments. These requests convey that you're a player.
- Interdisciplinarity is admired nowadays so if there's someone in another dept/unit whom you'd like to meet, ask whoever is scheduling your interview if this is possible. But then you need to be sure to have something to talk to them about
- **Joint appointments**
- **Tradeoffs regarding the timing of your talk during your visit.** Doing it late in the interview means that in many of the one-on-one visits, people will ask you questions that you are going to answer in your talk. On the other hand, you will have already met some people with whom you have some rapport and that may make you more comfortable. If you have a strong preference, you can let the

- scheduler know. Bear in mind that a talk at 9 a.m. in Bloomington IN will feel like 6 a.m. pacific time.
- Ask your contact person to fax or email your schedule ahead of time. You can use the list of appointments to learn more about the work of the people you're scheduled to talk to .

The Job Talk

- There are six cardinal rules for a job talk:
 - a. Practice.
 - b. Practice.
 - c. Practice. It's impossible to practice too much. You have to be utterly comfortable with your talk. This will allow you to make eye contact, to pay attention to timing, and to notice how people are receiving it.

b. Find out beforehand how long to talk and don't exceed that limit by more than two or three minutes. Typical is 40-45, but find out what the particular institution expects. Ask people in the audience to defer questions. Otherwise they'll take over. The norm in other disciplines, especially economics, is constant interruption.

c. Talks need three things: a beginning, a middle, and an end. Often people don't do this. The end is the hardest. It should say: this is what I showed; this is the contribution this research is making.

Be sure to allow time for a conclusion and for discussion. Don't let the beginning be too long. Don't make listeners suffer through the methodological details; put 'em in a handout. Non-charismatic people whose talks have a beginning, middle, and end are better received than wildly entertaining speakers who never get to the point.

d. During the discussion, if someone asks about something you don't know admit it. Say this is a good idea—I'll look into it.
- Should you read your talk? Stand up? Sit down? Ask for water? Do what makes sense to you. These things don't matter.
- Don't provide handouts ahead of time. Wait until you get to the point when you discuss them. People's tendency is to try to analyze your results themselves, so they won't be listening to you. Don't provide too much information, which gives them ammunition. Just print out your key results; you don't have to include your control variables. If you use overheads or powerpoint, bring handouts as well, since sometimes equipment doesn't work. Don't "drop" names of the faculty in your talk. It will look like apple polishing.
- But do know the names of the faculty; people who haven't published in 20 years are still offended if you don't know who they are.

Office Visits with Faculty

- During your one-on-one office visits with faculty, you need to be in charge of timing. Faculty have copies of your schedule, but they tend to lose them. You're in charge of keeping to the schedule, since most of the time, the faculty won't. A good line is "Oh, my gosh! We've got to stop now." It's odd, because you're both powerless and in charge. Don't be surprised if someone suggests using the half hour to show you the campus, the library, or the community.
- Typical questions you will be asked are "what are you working on" and "do you have any questions?" They may not have looked at your vita. They're busy people. You can take charge, but first be sure they don't have things to say. You may want to use the "questions you can ask" document at the end of this. What about asking about the department's research expectations for assistant professors? You don't want to signal that you're worried, and you don't know how they'll interpret the question. You can perhaps ask the chair or someone you have good rapport with, but it's probably better not to ask at this point. You can ask after you've gotten the offer. It's also touchy to talk about the history of tenure. It's impossible to answer in a sound bite—any tenure denials require an explanation, and giving those details makes it sound like they are dishing dirt about individuals.

Meeting with the Chair

- Your meeting with the chair usually comes at the end. By the end of the visit, there has been talk about you. People care about hiring decisions, and the chair will have a sense of your fit and the faculty's impressions of you. You'll have a sense of the department, too (perhaps you have gotten hints of political infighting). This is a key time to get remaining questions answered, and you should come in with questions.
- Don't negotiate anything at this point. Regarding salary, don't say anything. Salary isn't everything, and you don't have to maximize on it; research assistants and summer salary are also negotiating points.
- The chair will talk about teaching. Don't commit to something you would hate to teach. You can make a distinction between what you want to teach and what you could teach. The number of preps is the key. A good deal would include getting a course off your first year and having two preps. In subsequent years, a new prep every other year would be good. You can ask if some people "own" courses, if they'll push you to teach in the early morning or in the evening. Look at a class schedule to get a sense of offerings.
- Often you'll have passive chairs. If no agenda for the meeting is forthcoming from them, you need to be ready to find out what you need to know, prefaced with "Do you mind if I ask some questions?"
- Should you mention a partner at this point either in regard to helping the partner find employment or in regard to domestic partner benefits? It's a hard call about when to let them know, especially if the partner is in your same discipline. What about children? Institutions vary hugely on whether they provide paid or unpaid leave and whether they stop the tenure clock. It's tough to know when to raise these kinds of issues, but it's probably better to wait. You just don't know these

people and how they'll react. If you get an offer, everything changes. At that point, they want you to come. You can ask then. Some information you can find out from other sources (HR info is often online.)

- Often you'll have a meeting with the Dean, although this isn't always the case. In any event, it's typically perfunctory.

Social Events and Presentation of Self

- Do not be the life of the party at dinners or other affairs. They aren't picking you for your social skills. Instead try to see if these are the kind of people you would enjoy hanging out with on a regular basis. Do they seem to enjoy each other's company?
- Don't drink or drink very little.
- Don't try to be an inside dopester, don't gossip about other sociologists; don't repeat to person B something that person A told you!
- Should you use people's first names? OK with junior faculty; with senior faculty probably safest not to call them anything.
- The people who go out with you for meals may not be representative of the department. Don't generalize from one person to the department. Free meals can draw out the atypical people.
- Avoid expressive behaviors that show you're weird. This isn't the setting for making identity statements.

Don't wear strange clothes.

Cover visible tattoos unless they are on your ankles or toes.

Avoid strongly-scented products (shampoo, deodorant, shaving lotion, hand lotion, etc.).

A second layer of clothes is a good idea (you never know about inside heating and air conditioning).

Probably don't wear jeans especially if you're female. Dressing nicely shows respect for the process. But don't be too concerned about what you wear; this isn't an interview at a bank.

(If you have time either to go shopping or to polish up your slides, do the latter!)

In other words, you want to be yourself and feel comfortable.