Preparation for Academic Job Interview

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Outline

• Preparation of academic application
• Invitations for academic job interview
• What to prepare for
  – Job talk
  – Meetings with faculty
  – Meetings with department head
  – Meetings with dean
  – Meetings with students
  – Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
  – Dress-code
  – Do’s and don’ts themes
Preparation of Academic Application

• Preparation of your CV
  – Research: publications, talks, proposal writing, awards
  – Teaching: teaching assistantship, awards, supervising undergrads, MS students
  – Service: reviewing of conference papers, journals, committees,

• Preparation of research statement
  – What is your overall scope of research landscape
  – What you have done in your research (highlights, cite publications)
  – What are some of your future directions

• Preparation of teaching statement
  – Why do you want to become a professor – general motivation and goals why you want to teach
  – What have you done in the teaching space – classes, advising, working with junior students, ...
  – What are your goals for the future regarding teaching – develop new courses, enhance existing classes with new modules, new teaching techniques (inverted classroom, ...), what classes would/could you teach.
Preparation of Academic Application (2)

• **Selection of reference writers**
  – Your advisor
  – 2-3 external letter writers depending on the request from individual schools
    • Your committee members
    • Your collaborators
      – Collaborator you met at internships
      – Collaborator you wrote a paper with
      – Profs you worked with and are not on your PhD committee
      – Researcher you met at conference(s) and knows your work well
    • Your supervisors during summer internships
      – Note: if you choose industrial letter writer for academic job, make sure that he/she knows how to write academic letters (usually researchers in industrial research labs know)

• **Working with reference writers**
  – Provide research and teaching statements
  – Provide list of schools and approaches how schools want to get the recommendation letters
    • Email, Weblink, Paper copy, ...

• **Selection of schools**
  – Consider only schools you are ready to accept offers and move in
  – Consider schools which have strong program in your area and appreciate your area
Invitation for Academic Job Interview

• You get an invitation for academic job interview and then what?

• You get asked/informed
  – What dates you may come
    • Usually it is a two day interview (depends on the size of the department)
    • Usually you give job talk during the first day
  – What will be your job talk title, abstract, bio
  – Who will be your host (host is – should be - your champion – use this fact)
  – Who will be the assistant of your host (or other assistant)
Invitation (2)

• **Decide on dates** (keep calendar of your interviews)
  – Keep enough space between interviews so that you can make it in time, relax, ...
  – Keep interview calendar on your website (possible)

• **Prepare title**, abstract, short bio and send to assistant/host

• **Contact host** (or the host contacts you)

• **Work with assistant** to setup hotel, travel, other requirements, dietary restrictions
Invitations (2)

• Ask host questions prior to your visit
  – Presentation equipment, recording, meeting students, ...
• Get agenda for your visit from the host
• Look up all faculty on your agenda
  – What’s their area
  – In your particular area, what’s the achievement of the faculty (papers, results, ..)
• Look up the campus, get familiar with the structure of the department/college (to the degree that you can see on the website)
  – E.g., if you interview in CS, make sure that you know in what college CS resides
Preparation of Academic Job Talk (1)

• Write your talk early !!!
  – Don’t wait until last minute
• Prepare the talk with broader context
  – Show clearly the importance and implications of your PhD work
• Focus on what main idea people should walk out of your talk
• Make your talk interesting with good examples
• Use inclusive language (he/she)
  – Be respectful to all groups
• Be enthusiastic about your research
  – It will reflect well about your teaching capabilities and how to engage students
• Use humor only if you feel comfortable using it (don’t force it)
Preparation for Academic Job Talk (2)

• The most important 50 minutes talk of your life
• Practice, practice, practice
  – Practice for Academic Job Talks (PACAJOT) this semester !!!
    • On Fridays (starting 15 February) !!!
• Understand your audience
  – Very diverse faculty audience
    • faculty from various areas, there might be only 4-5 faculty in your area, so your talk needs to impress all faculty (really difficulty)
  – Very focused student audience
• Finish on time !!!
  – If you go overtime, it is not good sign that you know how to control presentation time (how will you control your teaching presentations?)
• Leave time for questions
  – Answer questions briefly and to the point (if answer requires long answer, give brief answer and defer longer discussion after the lecture)
Application Job Talk (3)

• Practice in front of your friends
  – Q&A, feedback
  – Invite friends from different areas!!

• Do not concentrate on the non-responsive audience members
  – Look at people in the audience who are following your talk
  – Look at audience, but don’t get discouraged if you don’t see much response

• Stay in touch with your audience, but don’t change the flow of your talk during the talk based on audience feedback
Academic Job Talk (4)

• Structure (approximate)
  – 10 minutes - do introduction into the problem and placement into the overall space (what was the starting bar when you started your research)
    • Must be understood by everybody in the audience
  – 20-25 minutes – show depth in your problem solution
    • Must impress faculty in your area and neighboring areas
  – 10 minutes – show results
    • Must impress everybody – you should show that the solution to the problem introduced in the introduction yields great results
  – 5-10 minutes – provide impact of your research and vision for the future
    • Must provide enough information that faculty understands what you will do when you join the department
Other Job Talk Variations

• Not all faculty will be at your talk (teaching, committee meetings, student exams, ...)

• Prepare
  – 15-20 minutes summary of your research to give during a faculty meeting (1-1 meeting)
    • Consider if faculty is in your area or different area, head, or dean
  – 5 minutes summary of your research – elevator speech to give to a faculty you meet in the hall or grad student who accompanies you from one meeting to another
Meeting Faculty

• Prepare for meeting with faculty
• Look carefully at the agenda
• **Divide faculty into three categories**
  – Faculty in your area of expertise
  – Faculty in collaborative areas of your expertise
  – Faculty distant from your area of expertise
• Consider **what to discuss with each faculty**
  – Research accomplishments, impact, teaching, resources, collaboration between colleagues, departments, colleges, students, ....
Meeting with department head

• Prepare **short pitch of your research**
  – How will your research benefit to the department?
• **Ask questions** about
  – Teaching load
  – Resources (labs, assistants, IT, ...)
  – Collaborative efforts
  – Centers in department
  – Collaborative efforts across departments
  – You can bring up a two body problem
  – Any other question you have about the department, evaluation processes, resource allocation, teaching issues, sizes of classes, student quality, size of student body, alumni, employment of students, .....
Meeting with dean

- Each interviewee meets with dean of the college (or two if you interview for interdisciplinary position)

- Prepare **short pitch of your research**
  - Respond to question – how will your research benefit to the college?

- Ask questions
  - Resources
  - Collaborative efforts between departments, colleges,
  - Centers and research labs – their role and how you can benefit from it
  - Find out about initiatives at the college level (educational initiatives, research initiatives, ..)
Meeting with students

• If meeting with graduate students is not on the agenda, ask for it when you talk to the host prior to your visit

• Ask graduate students about
  – Resources (labs, office space, Tas, …)
  – Collaborative efforts
  – Attention to research, teaching, service, …
  – Support from department, …
  – ….
Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner themes

• **Breakfast**
  – Usually you may meet with host to discuss the day ahead of you
  – Ask questions – get clarifications when you heard some contradicting messages

• **Lunch and Dinner**
  – Meet faculty in less formal setting and relax (see from agenda who is attending)
  – Ask more informal questions such as housing, life on campus, general information about campus life, industry around campus, research park, social life in town, ....

• **Understand** table etiquette of the country/institution where you interview
Dress-Code

- The **first day** of your visit (when you give job talk), you should dress more formally
- The **second day** of your visit, you can dress more casually, but I would ask the host about the general dress code of the institution (and expectations).
  - West coast is more casual, east coast as well as mid-west institutions are more formal
- Female students – fully covered
  - formal dress or pens/jacket/blouse (first day)
- Male students
  - ties with suite (first day)
Do’s and Don’ts

• Recommendations:
  – Do ask about resources (in general), teaching load, students, faculty collaboration, grants, funding
  – Show interest about the department, campus, edu environment
  – Don’t ask during the first visit about salary, start-up packages, resources you need/want to get – this is all negotiable after you get offer
  – Don’t say bad things about your advisor, academic institution where you come from !!! (don’t brown-nose) People talk and it can come around to hunt you !!!
Conclusion

• Show interest in the interview/department/faculty !!!
  – Even if it is not your number one choice !!!

• Not only you are interviewed, but also you interview the faculty/department to find out if you and the department are a good fit for each other
  – Ask questions and respond to questions !!!

• Keep notes after each interview what happened so that you can make comparison once you get offer –

• BUT THAT IS TOPIC FOR NEXT TIME
Resources

• Internet Resources
  – Http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hEiZ7LkoLo