

STUDENT WORKSHOP: HOW TO GET A JOB OR FACULTY POSITION

La Paz, Mexico 2000

Dr. Jeff Carrier

Elasmo Grads and Reality Swimming with Conspecifics in the Marketplace

- Finding a Position –Decisions, decisions, decisions...

➤ **BACKGROUND**

- Job market improving
 - surge in retirements expected during next decade (Chronicle, 3/17/2000)
- Competition still strong; too many Ph.D.'s for available positions
- ABD chances weakening (Chronicle, 3/24/2000)

- Selecting THE “Job” –Decisions, decisions, decisions...

- Higher Education or Research?
 - Government or private research?
- Large school vs. small school
- Tenure-track vs. non-tenure-track
 - One-year vs. Multi-year

The “JOB” –Decisions, decisions, decisions...

<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ SMALL College<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Teaching Emphasis<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ 5-6 courses to teach each year➤ Research generally required, but productivity less	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ UNIVERSITY<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Research Emphasis<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ 1-2 courses to teach per year➤ Research emphasized; high productivity + often tied to external funding
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- THE “Job” – Interviews...you should ask

- How much “start-up” \$\$\$ is provided?
- Is there a sabbatical program:
 - pre-tenure?
 - post-tenure
- What travel funding is available to faculty to present papers?
- What is the normal teaching load?
- How many new “preps” can be expected per semester?
- What funding exists for each class you teach (esp. for labs)?
- Is there are program providing internal faculty grants (i.e. faculty development funds)?
- Health benefits provided?
 - Dental

➤ Vision

➤ Family

➤ When are you eligible to begin paying into retirement (TIAA-CREF) and what is the institutional match?

➤ What is your moving allowance?

➤ When is your first check?

➤ Are you paid out over 12 months or nine (or less, or more)?

- **THE “Job” –Interviews...you will be asked:**

➤ How much teaching experience do you have?

➤ Have you presented your work to your peers (regional, national, international)

➤ Have you published (peer review)?

➤ What awards do you have?

➤ teaching?

➤ research?

➤ scholarships (merit-based)

➤ Have you ever guided the research of others?

- **Understanding Tenure –**

➤ A contract issued to a faculty member, generally for an employment “lifetime,” that protects the rights of academic freedom

- **Understanding Tenure –Academic Freedom (A.A.U.P)**

➤ “Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties”

- **Understanding Tenure –Academic Freedom**

Ø “Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their ➤ “Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.”

➤ “When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations... and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.”

- **Understanding Tenure –Timing**

➤ Probationary

➤ Interim review; usually at year three

➤ Final review

➤ usually year six

➤ denial usually allows one more full year

➤ Sabbatical

➤ usually occurs in year eight

- **Understanding Faculty Rank**

- Instructor (usually A.B.D.)
- Assistant (usually pre-tenure)
- Associate
 - -usually has tenure + 6-8 years as Ass't
 - requires significant scholarship
- Professor ("Full")
 - -usually > 12 years (~5 as Assoc.)
 - continued strong scholarship

Dr. Jeff Carrier

Vice-President for Academic Affairs

Dean of the Faculty

Albion College

Albion, MI 49224

Phone ☎(517)629-0222

Fax: (517)629-0581

jcarrier@albion.edu

Dr. Christopher Lowe

So you want a job in academia?

One person's "how to" guide on beating the odds!

I. Graduate school stage - preparation

A. Think ahead!

- if you know what you want to do... consider yourself lucky!
- it's never too early to start planning your career.
- Seek the wisdom of the "elders", some will actually share their secrets of success!

B. Publish as you go!

- because of the tremendous competition out there for positions, pubs really matter (both quantity and quality).
- get involved in side projects.
- Collaborate with others as much as you can
- It may take you longer to finish, but it could pay off if you're getting pubs.

C. Teaching experience

- if you want to work at a "teaching" institution (non-Research institution), then you had better have some teaching experience under your belt.
- TAing helps a little, but you really need some lecturing/course design experience... teach a course at a JC in the evenings.
- Again, it may take you a little longer to finish your degree, but you'll never have more flexible time in life!
- Think about what kinds of courses you could teach and how your research experience could help YOU.

D. Grant writing experience

- get as much practice as you can. Apply for everything, whether your advisor has funding for your project or not.

II. When should you start applying for jobs?

- you could start applying your last year of your grad. school (Master's or PhD), but most folks start applying while they are in their I" Postdoctoral position.
- Cast a broad net... read the job descriptions very carefully and see what you may mesh into. Don't oversell yourself. Remember - truth in advertising!

III. Applying for a faculty position

- Do your homework... learn everything you can about the school/Dept. and faculty where you're applying.

- Taylor your application to the job description... pay careful attention to what is emphasized.
- Think about what kind of research you could do at that location, external funding, student involvement, etc.
- Think about your teaching pedagogy - your teaching philosophy and the types of classes that you could teach at that institution.
- How could you include new techniques or technology in your courses.
- Letters of recommendation - choose wisely!

IV. Phone interviews

- if you make it to the "long" list you may be asked to do a phone interview. You should ask them what types of questions they may ask you. They will ask all the candidates the same questions.
- Write out some notes based on the questions so that you can make sure you cover everything.
- Be relaxed, but enthusiastic. Figure, 2/3 of the candidates will be eliminated at this stage, so treat it as if it was a full interview.
- Do your homework on the faculty in that Dept. - remember hiring a tenure-track faculty member is like getting married. You want to make sure that you will fit in and they will be checking for the same.

V. Personal Interviews

- depending on the institution, 3 to 5 people could be brought on campus for in person interviews. They may be asked to present a seminar of their research and meet with many of the faculty.
- Your seminar: everyone will want to know about what you do and how it may mesh up with the Dept. goals. They will also assess your teaching ability from your presentation, so REALLY prepare!
- Search committee interviews - they will of course have lots of questions for you, but you should go in with some for them as well.
- Be friendly, open, and honest. Anyone can appreciate those qualities, so relax and be yourself.

Dr. Chris Lowe

Dept. of Biological Sciences
 California State University Long Beach
 1250 Bellflower Blvd.
 Long Beach CA 90840
 Phone:(562)985-4918
 Fax: (562)985-8878
Clowe@csulb.edu

Dr. John F. Morrissey

Hello. I hear you're looking for a job? And you want some advice from me on obtaining a job. Because I have a job. So I must know something, or I must have done something right. Well, for what it's worth, here's my opinion. Frankly, the only point that I wish to make is "be yourself". In my opinion, many students (especially pre-med students) try to "play the game" and dot the proper "i"s and cross the proper "t"s and all that crap. Yet, my experience has convinced me that there is no such thing as the "proper" docket or applicant. We've hired nine people in my department since I've been here (1991) and the one thing that has taught me is that it is a VERY subjective process ... because it has to be.

You see, when we advertise a tenure-track position, we stipulate that the applicant must have a Ph.D., good letters of recommendation, good teaching evaluations, and a strong history of funding and publication. Last, we stipulate those courses that we will expect the applicant to teach. And perhaps we give them some idea of the responsibilities involved (i.e., hard vs. soft money, lots of teaching or a little, 9- or 12-month salary, student composition in their classes and labs). Then, on average, we receive about 150 applications for each spot. Once we received 210!

And guess what? The vast majority of applicants have a Ph.D., and good letters of recommendation, and good publications, and good teaching evaluations, and good funding ... so how do we choose?!? Well, we choose based on idiosyncratic things that the applicant could never predict, such as an ability to teach a course that we need, or the desire to work with handicapped students, or experience with an expensive gizmo that we have (or want to buy), etc. And we even look for personality fit within the department (e.g., they have small children too, or they like to race sailboats too), because we have to work with this person for the next 30 years, and because we have that luxury ... because there is no objective way to distinguish 15 perfectly qualified people. Simply stated, we are forced to magnify minutia when making a selection. And as you prepare yourself and your application docket, always remember that you have no way of predicting those minutia.

Hence, I have only one point to make. When you get turned down after applying for a job, and odds are you will, that rejection is probably not due to your lack of qualifications. Instead, it's probably because you did not happen to match the 57 idiosyncratic needs of that particular department. I think students need to abandon the notion that one can prepare oneself to be the perfect candidate - one whom will get most jobs for which they apply. It's impossible ... you simply do what everyone else does (i.e., accumulate a Ph.D. and teaching experience and a funding history and a publication record and a repertoire of courses) ... and then cross your fingers and hope that you are lucky enough to be the perfect (accidental) match for a particular department.

So, my only point is "keep your chin up. " A rejection doesn't mean that you are not qualified. My department has turned down hundreds of qualified people this decade for reasons that were anything but objective. Just keep applying!

John F. Morrissey
Associate Professor Biology Department
114 Hofstra University
Hempstead, NY 11549-1140
516-463-5517; FAX 516-463-5112
NEW E-mail: John.F.Morrissey@Hofstra.edu

Dr. Adam P. Summers

There are as many job search strategies as there are employed biologists so I make no claims to generality, rather I will tell you what worked in my case. Unfortunately I can only explain the things that were important from my point of view, rather than from the point of view of the people who gave me post-docs and hired me as a faculty member. In my opinion, one of the most important things to realize is that there are several types of post-docs, and many types of jobs. In general the job situation is far better than it was ten years ago, but post-docs seem harder to get. I am a strong proponent of being goal directed in your search. Just generally looking around is unlikely to be as successful as a directed effort towards the type of position you REALLY want. One of my mentors advocates preparing yourself for a single job for the last several years of graduate school. Then apply for that job (or one that is just like it) when you are ready. This is a powerful technique because all of your materials, especially your recommendations, are tailored for the job. Of course the downside is that there is not a lot of room for error.

Post-doc hunting - there are really three distinct types: 1) PI-funded post-docs, 2) teaching post-docs, and 3) research post-docs.

I. PI-funded post-docs are funded directly from the grant of a principal investigator (PI), or occasionally a department, and are closely tied to a particular research project. The project might be funded by the ONR, NSF, NWS, or even institutional seed money, but the unifying theme is that there is PI with the hiring power and a specific project in mind. Your best bet for getting these type of post-docs is to attend meetings, talk to people who do research that interest you, and send copies of your papers to folks you think might be interesting to work with. A key factor to keep in mind is that the PI is going to have to make a decision about who they would like to share lab space with for a couple of years. It is often a first step in a meaningful collaboration and so the selection process is inherently a personalized one.

II. There are a few post-docs that allow you to do research part time in return for some amount of teaching. The teaching load varies widely, from principal lecturer in a single course, to being one of several teaching assistants, to teaching several courses a year. The rest of the time is yours for research. Many of these post-docs offer a research budget to help defray your costs. These post-docs also range from one-year to three-year appointments. There is no one way to pursue a teaching post-doc. The key is to look at the selection process. Is it more like a job search or is there one person that you would be working with? If the latter then getting the job is similar to the PI-funded post-doc. if the former then it is more like the research post-doc. Either way, a record of a commitment to teaching undergraduates will go a long way. A teaching portfolio, with your philosophy of teaching, outlines of lectures/courses, and evaluations, will make a very good impression. Make sure that your CV has all of the teaching that you do. I try to give two or three lectures a year outside of the university (kindergarten through high-school), and I have done this since I started graduate school. Make sure this sort of thing is in your teaching portfolio. A very nice benefit of many teaching post-docs is that you will take substantial responsibility for teaching an entire course, which is very good for your CV when looking for a job.

III . Research post-docs (and some of the teaching post-docs) give you the freedom to pursue a project that interests you. These post-docs are awarded competitively, either by a grant (NSF/NIH) or directly by an institution. AU of them provide a stipend and money to do your research. Most are transportable at some level, either from one lab to another in an institution or from one university to another. The strategy for getting these post-docs depends on whether they are grant or institution funded. If grant funded the same sort of things that will help a faculty member get an NSF grant will help you: pilot data, clear hypotheses, and a record of publishing results in major, peer- reviewed journals. The institutional post-docs place less emphasis on pilot data and hypotheses, in fact the research statement is usually quite brief. Instead, your publication record and your recommendations are going to be weighed very heavily. When it comes to recommendations do not feel you have to limit yourself to the requested number. If you do decide to ask for some extra recommendations be selective. Make sure that the extra referee(s) will add something to the application, either someone who has seen another aspect of your research, someone at a distant institution, or a really well- known scientist.

Job hunting - there are many different types of jobs. The greatest service you can do yourself is to learn that there are more choices than the 'lots of teaching/no research' or 'lots of research/no teaching' dichotomy would lead you to believe. When you look at job ads try to figure out what it would be like to live in the department. How does it differ from the departments you know well? What sorts of things do you expect to be a refreshing change from your current situation. We all know at least one department really well. Use that as a metric for your feelings about other jobs. It is not a good plan to apply for jobs that you would not be happy to get. Applying for jobs that you wouldn't take saps your energy, dilutes the power of your referee's letters, and is not fair to the department that reads your application.

Once you have decided on a few (3 -12) jobs that you would really like, here are a few common-sense suggestions.

- Target your cover letter, curriculum vitae, teaching statement, and research statement as though each job is the only one you are applying for.
- Send all the requested materials in one envelope to the correct address.
- I am never able to get things done early, I use Fed-ex so as not to miss deadlines. Make sure the package arrives by the date it is supposed to.
- if you are including reprints make sure that they are originals or clean copies. If you are sending a large number of reprints consider leaving out some of the less significant ones.
- Ask for recommendations as early as you can.
- Keep track of whom you have asked for recommendations and remind them as the deadline comes due that you need them to send something. Once the application is in, keep your referees informed of the process. Just a note explaining that you got and interview someplace, or got turned down for some job, is a good way to keep them involved in the process.
- Use the web to figure out what sort of department you are applying to. It may help you in writing your various statements of purpose.

Dr. Adam Summers

Museum of Vertebrate Zoology

3101 VLSB

University of California

Berkley, CA 94720-3140
Phone:(510)543-0125
Fax: (419)781-9275
asummers@uclink.berkeley.edu