

# Academic Job Search 101

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*Faculty panel:*

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# Workshop outline

- ▶ Application process overview

CVs

Cover letters

Other application documents

Interviewing process

Q/A panel



Application process overview:

# Academic job search timeline

**>15 months** before position would begin:

- Renew connections with faculty
- Prepare your CV
- Discuss your plans with your advisor
- Investigate potential funding sources
- Submit publications
- Think about the types of positions and institutions to which you'd like to apply

Application process overview:

# Academic job search timeline

**12 months** before position would begin:

- Finalize CV
- Request letters of recommendation
- Look for job postings weekly
- Apply!
- Consider making a few direct inquiries to departments of particular interest
- Keep in close contact with your advisor(s)

Application process overview:

# Academic job search timeline

**6-8 months** before position would begin:

- Keep applying for positions
- Practice interviewing and giving job talks
- Go on interviews or have telephone interviews
- Receive and negotiate offers
- Thank everyone who helped you

Application process overview:

# Finding academic job announcements

## Online:

[ScienceCareers.org](http://ScienceCareers.org)

[Naturejobs.com](http://Naturejobs.com)

[Chronicle.com](http://Chronicle.com)

[Academic360.com](http://Academic360.com)

Specialty journals in your field

Conferences and meetings

Scholarly associations

Your network: current advisor, former advisors, and department faculty

Application process overview:

## **Typical application materials**

Curriculum vitae

Letter of application (cover letter)

Description of future research  
plans/interests (research statement)

Statement of teaching philosophy  
(esp. for teaching colleges)

Letters of reference

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CVs:

## Overview

*Curriculum Vitae*: “The course of one’s life, or career”

- Focuses solely on earned degrees, teaching, scholarship, and other academic-related activities
- Used for **academic-related pursuits** (grant proposals, conference introductions, academic jobs, etc.)
- Standard format

CVs:

# Differences: industry vs. academia

## CVs for academia

Unlimited length

Complete history; changes little

Just the facts

Strict organization

## Resumes for industry

1-3 Pages, plus pubs

Selected history; changes to target position

Self-promotion expected

Organized to manipulate reader

CVs:

# Sections

## **Name/Contact Information**

Phone, email, mailing address, website

## **Education**

Graduate degree(s): university, degree, field, date of completion, concentrations, dissertation title, name of advisor

Undergrad degree(s): university, degree, major, date of completion, honors

## **Research Experience**

University, location, department, date, title, laboratory

Brief research project statement(s) starting with action verb.

Patents may be sub-category or go under publications.

CVs:

# Sections

## **Teaching Experience (or Teaching Competencies)**

University, location, department, date, title, course titles

Brief description of course accomplishments, size. May include scope of responsibilities (held office hours, developed exams)

## **Grants and Fellowships**

## **Research Interests**

Brief description of plans. Use some specifics for credibility, but keep it general enough to cover a multi-year endeavor.

## **Honors and Awards**

Briefly explain context for obscure scholarships and awards

## **Scholarly and Professional Affiliations**

Highlight leadership positions held

CVs:

# Sections

## **Training, Mentoring, and Advising Experience**

Arrange similar to *Teaching Experience* section

## **Presentations**

## **Publications**

Follow format used in your field. Emphasize your name in author list. List in order of newest first. Okay to use subheadings (clearly note works in-progress)

## **Other**

Languages, areas of expertise (skills), licensure or certifications, university service, community activities

## **References**

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

***The Scripps Research Institute***, Department of Molecular Biology, La Jolla, CA (7/2006 – present)  
Postdoctoral Research Associate, Laboratory of John Biologist, Ph.D.

- Developed refolding and purification protocol for HIV protease. Subsequently crystallized and determined the structure of the wild-type HIV protease, as well as a series of three increasingly drug-resistant mutants of HIV protease in complex with the potent inhibitor, TL-3. These findings provided key insights into the *in vivo* evolution of drug resistance and concomitant recovery of native catalytic activity...

***University of Washington***, Department of Chemistry, Seattle, WA (9/2001 – 7/2006)  
Ph.D. Candidate, Laboratory of Amy Chemist, Ph.D.

- Evaluated algorithms to account for protein conformational flexibility in virtual screening, and showed that explicit sampling of multiple conformations is qualitatively better than docking against a single target structure with a soft interaction potential. Collaborated with medicinal chemists to discover novel inhibitors for aldose reductase.

## **HONORS & AWARDS**

- J. Doe Award (one of 2 selected for academic excellence from among 300 grad students), 7/2006
- Terry Palwell Award (for Outstanding Contribution in Stem Cell Research), 5/2006
- Travel Award, American Physiological Society, 4/2005

## **PUBLICATIONS**

...

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Cover letters:

## Cover letter objectives

**Introduce yourself** as a competitive candidate:

- Make a strong first impression as a promising researcher, teacher, and colleague who is well-matched to the position

**Entice** the reader to carefully examine your application

- ▶ **Get an interview!**

Cover letters:

# Differences: industry vs. academia

## **Business/Industry letters**

Self-promotion expected

May include bulleted lists

Stresses skills

Often required

Important role in application package

1-page maximum

## **Academic letters**

More conservative language

No bullets or organizational formatting

Stresses research/teaching 'fit'

Always required

Critical role in application package

1-2 pages

Cover letters:

# Before you begin, do your homework!

How big is the dept. and to what extent do you need to **translate the significance** of your work?

Is it a **new position** or are they replacing someone?

Is it a joint or multidisciplinary appointment?

How can your background **fit** with the **department's goals**?

Cover letters:

# Components

- ➊ Provide a self-introduction and specify desired position
- ➋ Summarize important research accomplishments
- ➌ Briefly describe research plans
- ➍ Briefly describe teaching or clinical experience (if necessary)
- ➎ Disclose any special circumstances and close

Cover letters:

# Introduction

- State how you learned about the position
- Show that you've **done your homework**

Please accept these materials as application for Assistant Professor of Immunology at Big University. I am an immunologist currently finishing postdoctoral study in the laboratory of John Smart at XY University.

Professor Jane Brilliant informed me of this opportunity during our recent collaboration on molecular mechanisms regulating T cell development. After reviewing your faculty members' research interests, I believe my background in T cell development and enthusiasm for multidisciplinary collaborative research would be assets for the Department of Immunology at Big University. In fact, I have extensive experience in the 3 areas you mention in...

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor of Biology as advertised in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. I am currently a postdoctoral scholar in the Chemical Biology Department at Big University and will be completing my research appointment in the spring of 20XX. During my years at Big University as a graduate student and postdoc, I have had the opportunity to work in both the laboratory and the classroom and it was in the classroom that I found my true calling. I am committed to pursuing a career that focuses on teaching and mentoring and am eager to join the faculty of Teaching College because I am committed to the goals and values of Teaching College: to instill in students a love of learning and a respect and appreciation for others that they will bring to our society at large...

Cover letters:

## Components

- ① Provide a self-introduction and specify desired position
- ② Summarize important research accomplishments
- ③ Briefly describe research plans
- ④ Briefly describe teaching or clinical experience (if necessary)
- ⑤ Disclose any special circumstances and close

My primary research goals are directed toward understanding the basis for molecular regeneration at the atomic level using physics-based computational methods. As a postdoctoral fellow at Big University and as a graduate student at Prestigious University with Dr. Gordon Freeman, I have balanced method development for computational structure-based drug design with the application of these powerful tools to relevant antiviral and anticancer targets. My future research plans are aimed at *[1-2 sentences describing near-term goals]*. My ultimate aim is to *[1-2 sentences describing long-term goals]*.

Cover letters:

# Components

- ① Provide a self-introduction and specify desired position
- ② Summarize important research accomplishments
- ③ Briefly describe research plans
- ④ Briefly describe teaching or clinical experience (if necessary)
- ⑤ Disclose any special circumstances and close



Cover letters:

## **Emphasize teaching (as appropriate)**

Highlight a few **consistent strengths**  
from course evaluations

Mention any **teaching awards**

Mention highly relevant past TA  
experiences

Use **examples** to illustrate **why** you'd  
be a great teacher

“...I have already had the pleasure of mentoring several undergraduate students in this research and have seen that it is ideal for young scientists. *Arabidopsis* is an easy organism to work with...and simple assays in guard cell signaling can yield significant and exciting results. Students are particularly drawn to the human interest of the research...”

Cover letters:

## Components

- ① Provide a self-introduction and specify desired position
- ② Summarize important research accomplishments
- ③ Briefly describe research plans
- ④ Briefly describe teaching or clinical experience (if necessary)
- ⑤ **Disclose any special circumstances and close**

Cover letters:

## **Closing the letter**

Request accommodations (i.e., wheelchair access)

Planning to be in the area? Mention travel dates and availability

Explain potential 'red flags' (i.e., gaps in experience or multiple postdoc positions)

List enclosures and mention materials arriving under separate cover

Cover letters:

## **Final tips**

**Tailor** it to the position and  
**convey interest**

**Keep copies:**

Create & save different versions

Use **11-pt or 12-pt** legible fonts, keep  
standard margins, aim for **1-2 pages**

Address letter to **search committee  
chair**

September 23, 2009

Marty McFly, Ph.D.  
Department of Music  
Hill Valley University  
Hill Valley, CA 92108

Dr. Emmett Brown  
Chair, Faculty Search Committee  
Department of Space-Time Anomalies  
California Institute of Technology  
1200 East California Boulevard  
Pasadena, CA 91125

Dear Dr. Brown:



**Top left**

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▶ **Other application documents**

Interviewing process

Q/A panel



Other application documents:

## Research statement

“ Identify your goals, state why those goals are important, define your approach to achieving those goals, and indicate the kinds of evidence that will validate your approach. Oh, and do it clearly and succinctly. ”

Other application documents:

## Research statement

“ I want to see 3 elements in the research proposal: what will get you your first grant; the body of work that will lead to tenure; and evidence of creative thinking, showing your capacity to hit one out of the park. ”

Other application documents:

# Research statement

*A research statement outlines:*

- What you have been doing recently and currently
- What direction you hope to go (showing independence)
- How your research contributes to your field
- Your specific goals for a 3-5 year period (including possible funding avenues)

Other application documents:

# Research statement

## ***Content tips:***

Demonstrate your independence

*“The best plans usually build on the prior experience of the applicant but are not direct extensions of their postdoctoral work.”*

Include preliminary data when possible

Present more than one good idea and  
include redundant approaches

Provide context: *“Why must this work be done?”*

Credit others' work

Other application documents:

# Research statement

## *Formatting tips:*

Keep it short (**generally 1-3 pages**)

Include an **intro/abstract/executive summary**

Use white space and **explicit headings** and bullets

Write carefully, use topic sentences

Use clear figures

Arrange it chronologically

Other application documents:

# Research statement

## *Checklist:*

- Is it sufficiently different from your past work? Advisor's work?
- Is it sufficiently important? Is it sufficiently novel?
- Too ambitious? Too broad? Ambitious enough? Too narrow?
- Is it customized for the position? Can it realistically be carried out in the department/school?
- Does it convince the reader that it is fundable?
- Detailed enough to be convincing? (Yet not boring?)
- Are backup approach(es) described?
- Does the overall document convince the reader that the writer can complete the strategy laid out in the Future Research section?
- Is the "attitude" right? (i.e., Not overly hyped language? Others credited? Focused on contributions/accomplishments, not experiences/skills?)

Other application documents:

# Research statement

## *Online resources:*

- ▶ [Writing a Research Plan](#) (Jim Austin, ScienceCareers.org)
- [Developing a Winning Research Statement](#) (UCSF  
Preparing Future Faculty)
- [The Truth Behind Teaching and Research Statements](#)  
(Peter Fiske, author of *Put Your Science to Work!*)
- ▶ [Crafting the Research Statement](#) (James A. Pawelczyk,  
Penn State, presentation at APA/FASEB Trainee  
Symposium)
- [Writing an Effective Research Statement](#) (Career Services,  
University of Pennsylvania)

Other application documents:

# Teaching philosophy

## *Search committees want to know:*

- Will this candidate be able to handle the teaching responsibilities of the job?
- Does his/her approach to teaching suggest that he/she would be a good “fit” for our department and our students?
- Does this candidate want to teach? If so, why?
- If I were to step into a classroom and observe this candidate teaching, what would I see?
- How do this candidate’s research interests shape his/her teaching?
- What will this candidate add to our department? What will our students gain from his/her classes? What will our department gain?
- How does this candidate respond to the perennial challenges of teaching?

Other application documents:

# Teaching philosophy

## ***Formatting:***

- 1-2 pages long
- Personal narrative (present tense, first person)

## ***Content - answer 4 questions:***

- Why do you teach? (motivation, beliefs)
- What do you teach? (strengths, evidence)
- How do you teach? (methods, pedagogy, examples)
- How do you measure your effectiveness?  
(assessment, evaluation)

Other application documents:

# Teaching philosophy

## *Content - another approach:*

- How do people learn?
- How do I facilitate that learning?
- What goals do I have for my students?
- Why do I teach the way that I do?
- What do I do to implement these ideas about teaching and learning in the classroom?
- Are these things working? Do my students meet the goals?
- How do I know they are working?
- What are my future goals for growth as a teacher?

Other application documents:

# Teaching philosophy

## *Online resources:*

[Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement](#) (Washington Univ. Teaching Center)

[Developing a Teaching Portfolio](#) (The Ohio State University Center for the Advancement of Teaching)

[How to Write a Teaching Philosophy for Academic Employment](#) (ACS Department of Career Services)

[Teaching Strategies: The Teaching Philosophy/Teaching Statement](#) (University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching)

[Creating a Teaching Philosophy You Can Use](#) (MSU Teaching Assistant Programs)

[Writing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy for the Academic Job Search](#) (University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching)

[How to Write a Statement of Teaching Philosophy](#) (Chronicle of Higher Ed.)

[Writing the Teaching Statement](#) (ScienceCareers.org)

Other application documents:

## **Letters of reference**

Usually 3: Ph.D. advisor, current PI, and another collaborator or mentor

Ask for letters far in advance of deadlines (>2 weeks...reminders are okay)

Provide helpful materials to recommenders: CV, job posting, papers, research statement, teaching statement

Offer to provide a template, key items you want addressed, or bulleted lists

Other application documents:

## Letters of reference

### Asking for letters

“Can I count on you to provide a *positive* letter of reference for me?”

“I’d appreciate a recommendation from you if you feel you know my work well enough to recommend me.”

### Countering negative references

“I know you think I’m overreaching in some of my applications. Can you give me examples of institutions for which you could honestly be supportive of my candidacy?”

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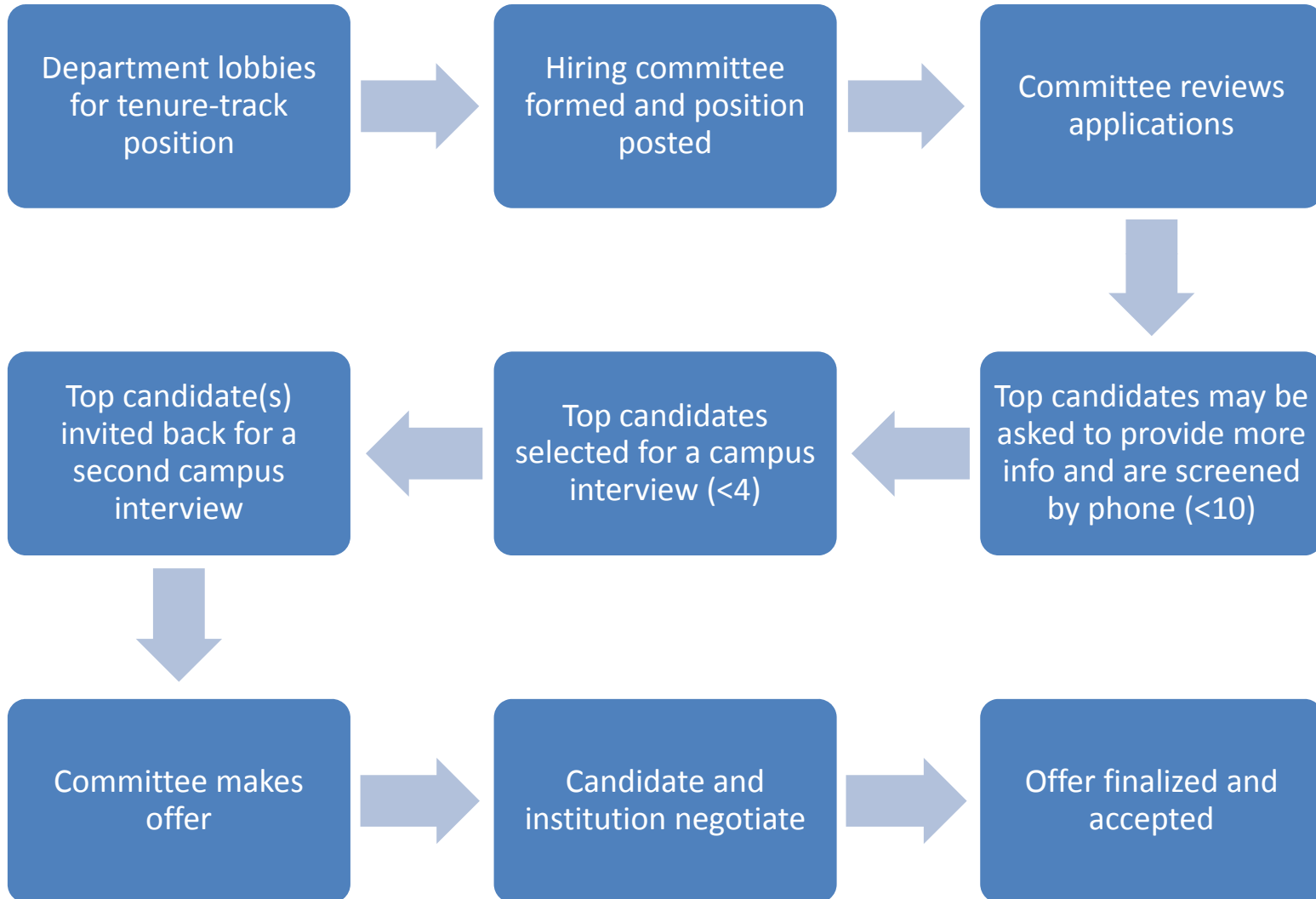
▶ Interviewing process

Q/A panel



## Interviewing process:

# Overview



Interviewing process:

## Phone screen

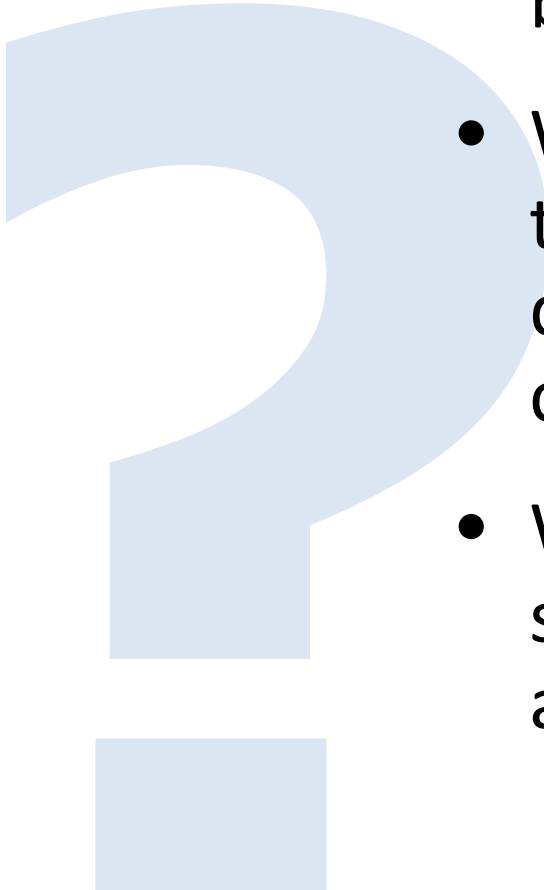
Tips for success:

- Schedule a time to talk
- Print out copies of your application documents
- Stand up, **smile**, dress up
- Have questions prepared

Interviewing process:

## Typical phone screen questions

- Which of your publications is your best or most seminal work and why?
- What courses would you be able to teach? Can you describe your qualifications for teaching these courses?
- What balance will you attempt to strike between research, teaching, and service?



Interviewing process:

## **Campus interview tips**

- **Research the institution and department** ahead of time
- **Covey enthusiasm** for the position and show genuine interest
- Be courteous to everyone
- Send **thank you notes**

Interviewing process:

## Campus interview structure

### Who you'll meet with:

- Search committee chair
- All/most search committee members
- Dean (and/or provost, president, chancellor)
- Grad students, postdocs, undergrads
- Potential faculty collaborators

1-2 days, 12+ hours/day

**1-on-1 interviews**

Job talk

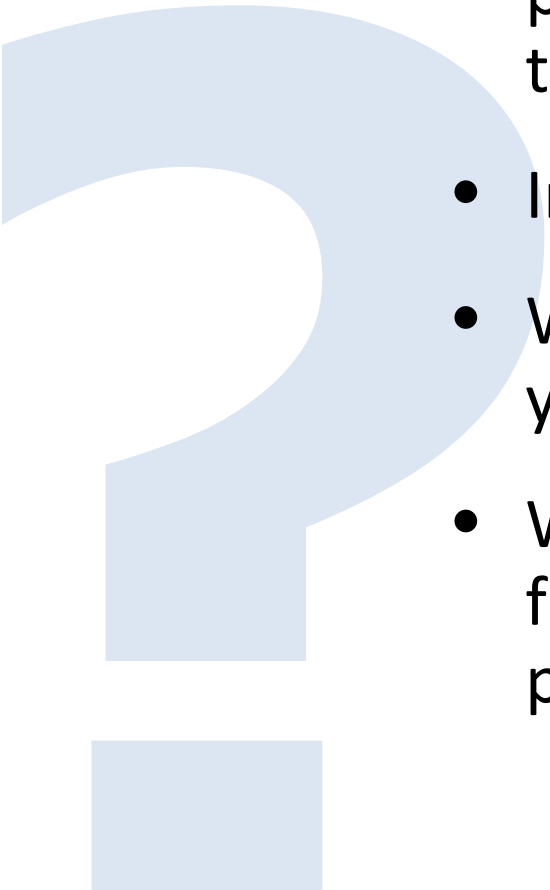
Chalk talk

Teaching demonstration

Dinner

Interviewing process:

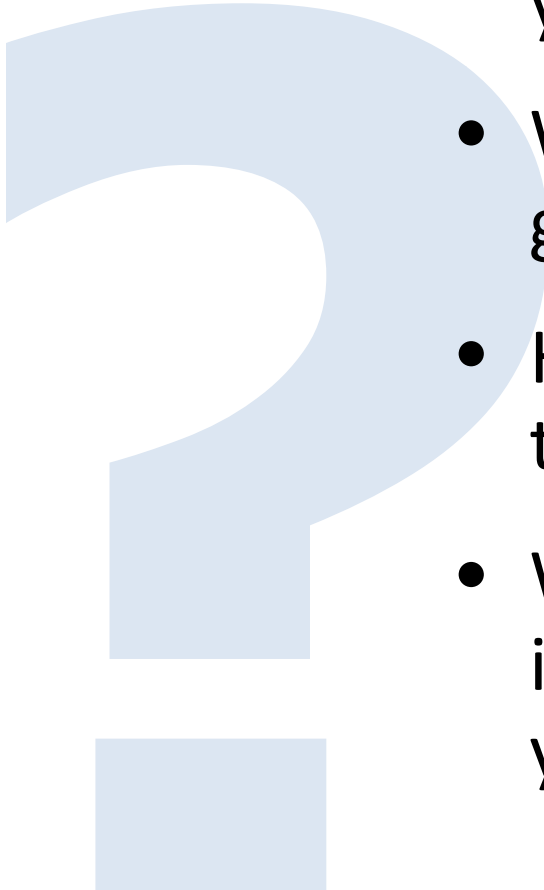
## Typical questions: research

- 
- Tell me about your current research program. What contribution does it make to our field? What do you plan next?
  - In doing your research, why didn't you \_\_\_\_?
  - What facilities do you need to carry out your research plans?
  - What are your plans for seeking external funding? When will you have sufficient preliminary data for a grant application?

Interviewing process:

## Typical questions: teaching

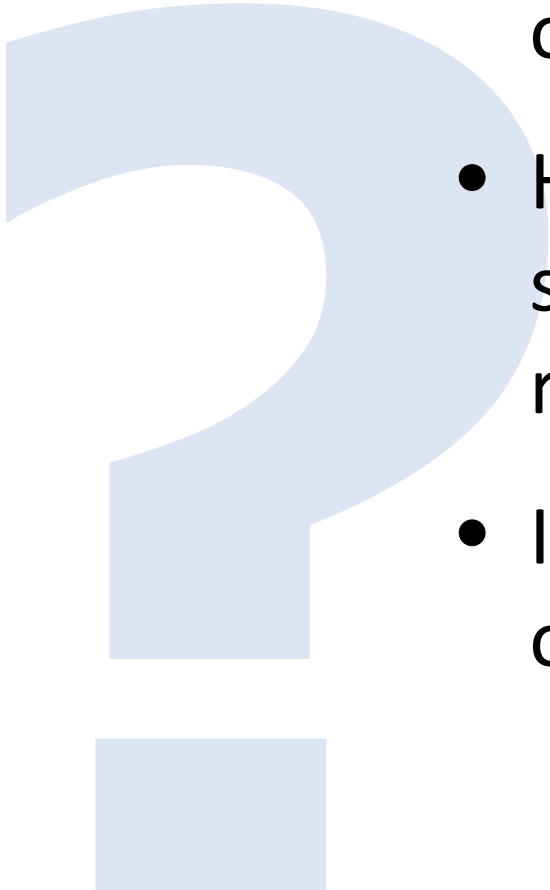
- How has your research influenced your teaching?
- What is good teaching? Are you a good teacher? Why?
- How would you encourage students to major in our field?
- What is your approach to teaching introductory \_\_\_\_\_? What texts would you use?



Interviewing process:

## Typical questions: general

- Why are you interested in this type of institution?
- How do you feel about living in a small town like this in an isolated rural area?
- If you have more than one job offer, how will you decide?



Interviewing process:

# Campus interview structure

1-2 days, 12+ hours/day

1-on-1 interviews

**Job talk**

Chalk talk

Teaching demonstration

Dinner

- Determine audience
- **Practice** with audience (including faculty)
- Show your independence without showing off
- Relate your work to the big picture
- Keep it succinct; don't try to include too much

Interviewing process:

## **Research seminar (job talk)**

### **Know your slides**

*Practice your talk many times*

### **Know your data**

*Do not try to cram in too much*

*Do not exceed allotted time*

### **Know your audience**

*Adjust complexity appropriately*

*Anticipate difficult questions*

Interviewing process:

# Campus interview structure

1-2 days, 12+ hours/day

1-on-1 interviews

Job talk

**Chalk talk**

Teaching demonstration

Dinner

- Build in a brief review component
- Focus on future research
- Discuss possible funding sources
- PowerPoint is often unnecessary

Interviewing process:

## **Campus interview structure**

1-2 days, 12+ hours/day

1-on-1 interviews

Job talk

Chalk talk

**Teaching demonstration**

Dinner

- Determine audience (often undergrads)
- Stick with your stylistic strengths
- Find out what the students are studying

Interviewing process:

## **Campus interview structure**

1-2 days, 12+ hours/day

1-on-1 interviews

Job talk

Chalk talk

Teaching demonstration

**Dinner**

- Be careful with alcohol
- Follow your hosts' lead

Interviewing process:

## Questions to ask the committee

- What formal mentoring resources do you have for new faculty?
- Can you tell me more about the tenure requirements at \_\_\_\_\_?
- How is teaching evaluated?
- What constitutes service and how much is expected of jr. faculty?

## Academic Job Search 101

# Resources

- [TSRI Career & Postdoctoral Services Office](#)
- The Academic Job Search Handbook, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.
- [UCSF Office of Career & Professional Development: Preparing Future Faculty](#)
- [Bill Lindstaedt 2007 presentation @ TSRI](#)
- [Chronicle of Higher Education](#)
- [ScienceCareers.org](#)
- [Making the Right Moves, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. \(BWF, HHMI\)](#)
- Individual advising appointments - [rwheeler@scripps.edu](mailto:rwheeler@scripps.edu)