

PICASso career
workshop:
Finding the ideal junior
faculty position

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Outline

- Applications
- Scheduling
- Interviews
- Offers and negotiations
- The final decision

Most of this is common sense, no magic answers

What is this whole thing about anyway?

- Departments need to grow:
 - Fill open slots
 - Move in new directions
 - Bring in new sources of \$
 - Spend some special pile of \$
- They want someone they can get along with socially, scientifically and in committees. 6-60 year commitment.

Overview of my experience

- Academia, not industry
- Fall 2004: Applied for 3 positions (dream jobs)
 - 1 interview, 0 offers
- Fall 2005: Applied for 17 positions (mixed, North East and West coast)
 - 8 interviews (w/6 mo old @ home), ~5 offers
- 2005 Experiences recorded in semi-realtime at:
<http://facultyjob.blogspot.com/>

Before you begin

- Get something done and publish it (hopefully more than one thing). But, quality is most important.
- Attend and present at conferences. Get to know your community.
- Find 3 good people who know your work and can write you letters. These should include your PhD (and postdoc) advisors – if not it raises a red flag.
- Think about what research you want to propose. Spend time discussing this with others so that it is mature by the time you write your applications.

Applications - shotgun approach

- Start looking for ads early. Online aggregation sites.
- Organize the information in a database with deadlines, contacts, addresses, phone #'s, etc.
- Most deadlines are Dec-Jan, but a large variance.
- There is no fee for applying, apply to many schools. Aim high - you never know what the schools are looking for.
- You don't need to fit the description exactly.

Application Materials

- Read other peoples successful applications. Get advice.
- You need a cover letter. It is silly but everyone does it.
- CV – make it readable. HTML or PDF. Avoid word.
- Research statement
 - 5–6 pages, fully referenced. Breadth and Depth.
 - Previous and Future (some schools split this up)
 - How will you fund it
- Teaching statement: Not all schools. Don't blow it off.
- Copies of published papers

Branding – Your website

- Many of the people you meet will learn about you through your website.
- **YOU NEED A WEB PRESENCE THAT REPRESENTS YOU SCIENTIFIC LIFE!**
- Find a professional looking website you like and copy the style.
- Put real details about your research. Movies, cool pictures. Think of it as advertising.
- You can put a little bit of personal stuff (cute pictures of your cat, fun recipes, your favorite band) but keep it to a minimum.

Scheduling Interviews

- With any luck you'll have many interviews
- 1-2 per week max - they are very tiring and travel takes a lot of energy out of you.
- Try to schedule the schools you care about the least early in the season so you are warmed up for the important ones.

What to bring: The road warrior's life

- Travel light, one bag plus your computer. Never check bags!
- Dress: Know the school and department
 - Business casual to a full suit. Tie?
 - Comfortable shoes
- Drugs: Excedrin, cold medicine, etc.
- Good toiletry kit - you will be living out of your suitcase

Structure of an interview

- Usually two days
- (Too many) meetings with faculty, students, deans, chairs etc.
- The job talk
- A proposal talk?
- A teaching lecture?
- Social events

The talk day – Endurance!

- Evening before: arrive, find hotel, SLEEP!
- Eat breakfast – you need fuel. Sometimes a breakfast meeting as early as 7:30am.
- Morning: Meetings
- Lunch with students or faculty
- Afternoon: more meetings and the talk
- Dinner: Still an interview
- Sleep ...

Usually a second day

- More meetings
- Usually you are more relaxed, but also more tired.
- A wrap up with the chair or dean

My visit at Rockefeller

Jan 30, 2006

- 8:30–9:30 Breakfast w/ Chair, Elaine Fuchs
- 9:30–10:15 Prof Libchaber
- 10:15–11:00 Prof Simon
- 11:00–11:45 Prof Chait
- 12:00–1:00 Lunch w/Grad Students
- 1:00–1:45 Prof Muir
- 1:45–2:30 Prof Kapoor
- 2:30–3:15 Prof MacKinnon
- 3:15–3:45 Setup for talk
- 3:45–5:00 Job Talk
- 5:00–6:00 Talk Reception
- 7:00–11:00 Dinner at Gotham Bar & Grill

Jan 31, 2006

- 9:30–10:15 Prof McKinney
- 10:15–11:00 Prof Darst
- 11:00–11:45 Discussion of lab space
- 11:45–1:15 Lunch with VP and Dean

In-between days on long trips

- Wash your interview clothes
- Restock your drugs and toiletries
- Email and phone correspondence. Make sure nothing blew up at home.
- Collect receipts for submission to the previous school.
- Write a thank you email.
- Read up on next interview's school and department.

The Job Talk

- Know your audience - Give the right talk.
- Practice, practice, practice in front of lots of different people.
- Framing and organization.
- Breadth and depth. You have to impress both the non-experts and the experts in your particular subfield.
- Stay within the time, slightly short is even better.
- Teach them something cool.
- Have fun - show them you love the material. A good speaker is often a good teacher.

Potential pitfalls

- Keep on track. Postpone tangential questions until the end/offline.
- Have some hidden slides for expected questions.
- Its ok to say you don't know something.
- Stay composed no matter what. A clear head is important.
- Remember, you are the actual expert.
- Be honest. BS is easily detected and is very annoying. You don't have to have solved world hunger to have done something interesting.

Individual meetings

- Have fun, be yourself.
- Need a 2/5/10 minute version of your talk.
- Need a 2/5/10 minute version of your proposal.
- Different kinds of meetings
 - Your previous research
 - Your future research plans
 - The interviewer's research
 - Ideas for resources/lab size/personnel
 - Teaching ideas
 - The school/department

Being social

- These will be your colleagues and friends
- You can drink alcohol and have fun, but not too much. You need to learn how to do this at some point ...
- Ask about life at the University and living in the area. Talk about more than science.
- Enjoy the food, the restaurants are often good.

Financing

- You need receipts for all your expenses to submit to the schools.
- School typically reimburse after everything is over. 10 cross-country flights is ~3-5k\$. Plus taxis and other expenses.
- You need lots of cash and high credit card limits.
- Carry at least \$200 on you just in case.

Post-interview lull

- Relax. Waiting is hard if you think about it too much.
- Try to get some research done or write papers. I was very excited to be back in lab after >3 months of travelling.

When the offers roll in

- After the first offer, contact the other schools. You want to know who wants you before you start.
- You need to figure out what you really need in terms of space, money, students, etc.
 - Make real lists with real numbers. The more concrete the better the response will be. This needs to be justified at the University level.
 - Get quotes for expensive things.
 - Be honest. What do you need to have your research succeed? They want you and want you to succeed.

The second visit

- Most schools will offer to fly you out for a second visit (with spouse). If they don't, you should ask for it.
- Now you are in control, they want you.
- Discuss things at a concrete level:
 - Lab space
 - Office space (you and students)
 - Facilities, money, etc.
- Ask everything. Explore the area, real estate and culture as well as the school and department.
- Talk to both junior and senior faculty. Are the junior folks happy?

Things to find out so you can compare offers

- Appointment details, Salary (%), Promotion process
- Moving expenses and Housing
- Spouse position, childcare, family leave and tenure clock
- Service, Teaching, Mentoring and mid-career reviews
- Startup package: \$, students, space

My complete list: [http://www.princeton.edu/~shaevitz/
Notes for faculty positions.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/~shaevitz/Notes_for_faculty_positions.pdf)

Negotiations – the dark side of the job search

- Give your contact person a real list of all the resources you need: \$, space, and equipment. This will be used as ammunition to get more from the University for you.
- Be honest. They want you to succeed but being petty is ugly
- Everything is negotiable, including salary.
- You can tell one school the details of another offer, don't show the letter. Give them the opportunity to match/beat.
- Don't go more than one round. Multiple rounds will probably produce results but will also piss people off. These are the same people who need to vote on your tenure.

The offer letter

- This is the contract and it is binding.
- Everything that matters must be in writing.
 - The Dean may not “remember” the extra little thing he promised you on the phone, but you can always refer to the letter.
- Go over it with a fine-tooth comb

The final decision

- Once you have the final offers on the table you do have to decide.
- Its hard, you can only go to one school.
- Many factors: Science, teaching, university, family, hobbies, geography, politics, culture
- Only you can decide. I usually tell people to go with their gut -- but not everyone can do that.

Wrapping up

- Once you decide, make it final right away.
 - Accept the offer in writing by mail and email a PDF of your signed acceptance to your contact.
- Tell all of the other schools immediately.
 - Answer any questions about why you chose the way you did honestly, but you don't have to go into any real depth. All scientific communities are small and you will see these people again.
- Make sure you are on track to get reimbursed for all your expenses.

General Advice

- Be yourself. Let them see who you really are.
- Have fun. The best way to get someone excited about you and your research is to show them how exciting it is to you.
- There are no winners and losers. You just need to find a home where you can be successful and happy.