**Finding an Academic Job that Fits Your Needs**

April 16, 2:30-4:00pm

ITLAL Underground (Library 69)

You know you want to work in academe, but in what capacity and where? 80% of PhD graduates don’t end up working at research universities, and many who do aren’t happy in that environment. Join us for a panel discussion with faculty members from local four-year schools and community colleges to learn what faculty life is like at different types of institutions.

**Summer Teaching Boot Camp**

May 20, 9:30am-1:30pm

Lecture Center 3C

In partnership with ITLAL, the UAlbany Future Faculty Leadership Council (UAFFLC) is hosting a 4-hour workshop for graduate students who will be teaching a summer course. You will leave with strategies and tools to turn your course into an opportunity for authentic engagement and genuine fun for both instructor and students.

To register for events or request services, please visit:

http://albany.edu/teachingandlearning

Or

Telephone: 442-5521

Or

E-mail: teachingandlearning@albany.edu

---

**The Academic Job Search:**

**Insights from New Faculty at UAlbany**

For this edition of Graduate Teaching at Albany, we surveyed seventeen faculty members who were hired at the University at Albany in 2014 to see what we could learn from their job search experience. Our sample included participants from five of the schools or colleges, including Arts & Sciences, Education, Rockefeller College, Public Health, and Computing & Information, so several different disciplines are represented. Below we have compiled their advice for graduate students preparing to enter the academic job market.

**An Overview of the Application Process**

When should you start the academic job search? The answer is: now! Survey participants overwhelmingly agreed that it’s never too early to begin your search by educating yourself about the process itself as well as the schools (and types of schools) that you plan to apply to. In addition to talking with mentors and advisors, there are various websites and books available, and these are a great resource for learning more about what to expect throughout your search and how to prepare for each step.

One step of learning about the process is figuring out where to find openings in your field. Our survey participants reported using several different means to search for jobs: professional magazines related to their fields, online academic job boards such as HigherEdJobs.com, professional organizations’ job listings and newsletters, schools’ websites, departmental listservs, flyers at conferences, and academic job wikis. The primary source of academic job listings varies by discipline, so it’s important to ask your advisor and other faculty in your department for guidance.

The message from our survey participants is clear: the path to an academic job is long and arduous, requiring months, or maybe years, of effort, but it is not impossible. You should be prepared to send multiple applications (our respondents sent between 6 and 114 applications, with the majority sending more than 40), and you need to plan carefully to allow time for the process of preparing all the materials you’ll be required to provide.

**Preparing Your Application Dossier**

Search committees will typically ask for five documents: your CV, cover letter, research statement, teaching statement, and letters of recommendation. It is crucial to tailor your dossier to the job you’re applying for. Using the language of the job ad as a guide, you want to explicitly outline how you meet the qualifications they’re looking for. For example, research universities will place the greatest value on your research and publications while teaching universities focus more on your teaching experience. Most of our survey respondents believed that their research and publications record mattered most in attracting search committees’ attention. However, they also cited several other important factors that made them viable candidates: teaching experience, collaborating in interdisciplinary projects, grant proposals, strong reference letters, and having a strong network within their field.

Respondents offered another strategy for preparing your materials: write to someone who is not in your field. It is common to have people on the committee who are not familiar with your specific line of research, and you need to be able to communicate your work to them. Writing for non-specialists also helps force you into clearer and more jargon-free writing, which even people who are in your discipline appreciate after reading 100+ applications. In addition to reviewing your own materials, have someone outside your committee and subfield read your documents. To get a sense of what a strong dossier looks like, solicit sample materials from individuals who have been successfully hired.

**Mastering the Interview**

Our respondents noted that confidence and presenting yourself as a professional are essential to a successful interview. The best way to achieve confidence is through preparation. A quick online search can help you to develop a list of typical interview questions. Practice answering these questions about your research, teaching, and background regularly (and out loud!) so that you sound natural, yet prepared. You can also take advantage of mock interviews when possible.
Another key element of preparation is taking time to learn about the people on the search committee as well as the rest of the faculty in the department before your interview. You want to show the committee that they’re hiring a colleague, not a graduate student, so prepare questions that show both your interest in the position and that you have taken time to look up information about the institution and department where you are interviewing.

**Challenging Interview Questions**

While they prepared for some of the most typical interview questions, many of our survey respondents faced questions that they didn’t expect. Here are some of the most challenging questions they faced:

- Where do you see yourself and your research going in 10 years?
- Why would you be a good addition to our department?
- Why is your research important?
- Why haven’t you published in a specific top-tier journal in your field?
- How do you plan to find funding in today’s challenging environment? How did you develop a grant proposal?
- How would you teach X graduate course or a dream graduate course?
- Questions about what you would do in hypothetical situations in a class, using what you have studied and worked on in your graduate studies.
- Tell us about diversity in your classroom.
- What kind of community engagement would you foster here?

**The Job Talk**

Regardless of the type of institution you’re applying to, you’ll be asked to give a job talk during your on-campus interview. Some will ask you to do both a research talk and a teaching demonstration, while others will schedule only a research talk and use that as an opportunity to observe your teaching skills. Once again, our participants recommended that the best way to prepare for the job talk is to practice, practice, and then practice some more—with an audience. Encourage listeners to ask you tough questions and give you constructive feedback. Try to assemble an audience with different backgrounds, including peers and faculty, particularly those who have served on search committees. Use this practice to hone your talk so that you can give it in the time allotted without going over. And keep it simple—being able to present the importance of your research in an understandable way also demonstrates your ability to teach complex subjects to future students.

**It’s All About Perseverance!**

As stated earlier, the process of getting an academic job is time and labor-intensive, and when that work doesn’t immediately pay off, it can be painful. Keep in mind that rejections are a natural part of this process; try not to take it personally. Learn from the experience and work on making your application stronger by redirecting your efforts. If you need more publications, focus on preparing research for publication. If you need more teaching experiences, then seek more teaching opportunities. And most importantly, take care of yourself during the process. Don’t beat yourself up when you’re getting rejected, and build a support network that can help you through the process.

ITLAL would like to offer a special thanks to all of the new faculty who took the time to share their experiences for this publication.

---

**Preparing Application Materials**

1. **CV (Curriculum Vitae):** The CV could be the first document the search committee will look at in your application, especially if you’re applying to a research university. While there is no “right” way to write a CV, there are conventions to follow. Look at the CV’s of faculty in your discipline—and get feedback as you write!

2. **Cover Letter:** A strong cover letter makes a convincing argument for why you should be invited to an interview. It is also used to direct the search committee’s attention to specific materials in your dossier. The cover letter should be structured based on the type of position and institution to which you are applying. Research the school so you can make a connection between what you possess and what they want.

3. **Teaching Statement:** The teaching statement is a reflective essay about your teaching beliefs and practices. You want to give the search committee a picture of how you teach your classes—and why you teach them that way—by offering concrete examples. You also want to offer evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of your teaching practices.

4. **Research Statement:** In this statement, you give the committee a summary of your research trajectory including achievements and current work. You also discuss the future direction of your work and make proposals for upcoming research.

5. **Recommendation Letters:** Because recommendation letters are time-consuming and difficult to write, it’s important to ask for these letters ahead of time and provide your recommenders with supplementary materials such as the job ad, your CV, and your cover letter. Don’t forget to follow up with your recommenders and express gratitude for their time and support.