

Tips for the Academic Job Search—regional university focus

Walter Henne, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, Governors State University

Postdoctoral Society of Argonne Faculty Search Panel Discussion

August 25, 2014

- 1. Focus mainly on positions where qualifications are a very good fit. Small schools typically need candidates that fill very specific roles (and also to meet accreditation requirements for ACS, etc.).**
2. Line up your letters of recommendations and get your application in as soon as possible. Many searches close off applications around December.
3. Make sure you use references that you are comfortable will give you an outstanding recommendation.
4. Carefully prepare your teaching statement (statement of teaching philosophy). Use only language that you understand and can sell in an interview.
- 5. Make sure to demonstrate evidence of interest and/or experience with teaching (preferably in the first page or two of your CV).**
6. Your CV is often the first document we look at. Highlight key job fit items and instructional experience preferably in the first page or two. The committee may be looking at 150 applications.
7. Make sure your CV is easy to read and follow. We do not have the time to hunt for items. Use the posted job description to customize your CV so relevant items are clearly stated and easy to find in the first few pages.
8. Practice answering questions on the phone/teleconferencing equipment to get a feel for this format. Make sure you are easily understood and that your equipment will work perfectly on the day of the interview.
9. Always get the names of your search committee members and follow up with thank you emails/letters.
10. If you have limited instructional experience, teach a workshop or give guest instructional lecture (not just research). Also consider an adjunct position (do not overdo it though!) We really need evidence of teaching experience.
11. Be flexible and willing to consider research/teaching in other areas. You will fill many roles at a small school and may have limited equipment/resources.
- 12. Committee work and outreach activities are a major plus on your CV. Think about the types of committees you may be interested in. It may come up at the interview.**
13. Do your homework on the institution and its faculty members and make sure you understand their mission and types of students they serve.
- 14. Present a research plan that is feasible at a small institution based on their resources, how you will integrate your research into your courses, and that you have reasonable requests for instrumentation/funds. How will your research enhance and compliment other faculty members' work? How will you collaborate and write grants with other faculty members and collaborators?**
- 15. Smile and try to convey a good-natured personality. After all, we are often selecting a colleague that will be with us until retirement.***

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Typical phone and on campus interview questions

- Tell us why you are interested in this position.
- How is your educational background and experiences suitable for this position.
- Please describe your teaching experience and your teaching philosophy.
- Which courses would you like to teach at the undergraduate and graduate level at this university?
- Please describe your prior research experience including the kind of research and scholarly activities you plan to undertake in this position. Also describe how you would engage undergraduate and graduate students in your research work.
- Please tell us about your instrumentation and other needs to carry out a successful research program at this university.
- Please tell us your experiences with non-traditional and adult students, and/or diverse populations.

Academic Search Resource Links:

Preparing Future Faculty:

<http://www.preparing-faculty.org/PFFWeb.Resources.htm#career>

Academic360—Job postings, career articles, advice:

<http://www.academic360.com/>

Cornell University Graduate School—guide for writing teaching philosophy statements:

<http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/professional-development/career-services>

Inside Higher Ed: <https://www.insidehighered.com/>

The Chronicle of Higher Education: www.chronicle.com

Vitae—Professional development and career resources for researchers:

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/>

Academic Job Search Timeline—regional university focus

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Example search process at a small regional university	Timeline
Search for candidate officially approved Committee and chair selected	April previous year/August of search year
Adds placed in periodicals appropriate for candidate (e.g., <i>C and E News</i>)	August
Search committee initially screens candidates' CVs, Teaching Statements, Research Interests Statements, Cover Letters, and Letters of Recommendation (50-150 applicants) for basic job requirements Candidates are scored using a numerical grid	September - December
Search meets (2-3 additional times) to narrow candidate pool to ~ 8-10 candidates for phone/teleconference interviews. Candidates are scored using a numerical grid Search maybe abandoned if qualified candidate pool is low (i.e., only 1 or 2 marginally qualified candidates). This occasionally happens for highly specialized positions.	November - December (may extend to after the holidays)
Phone/teleconference interviews (~30 minutes with 6-8 questions) Candidates are scored using a numerical grid	December - February
Search committee meets to narrows candidates for onsite visit (3-5 candidates)	February
Onsite interviews: Instruction lesson/lecture (1 h) with students typically present Research Seminar (1 h) Meet with search committee and answer questions Meet with chair and dean Candidates are scored using a numerical grid	February-March
Search Committee sends final report to chair and dean Search may be abandoned if no compelling candidate interviews	February- March
Candidate offered position Not uncommon to go down the list of candidates due to other offers.	March is the target but sometimes extends into April
Congratulations!	