

Preparing and Interviewing for Faculty Positions

November 11, 2020

Office of Career Planning & Professional Development

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The Graduate Center, room 3300.08



The Office of
Career Planning &
Professional Development

Zoom Controls



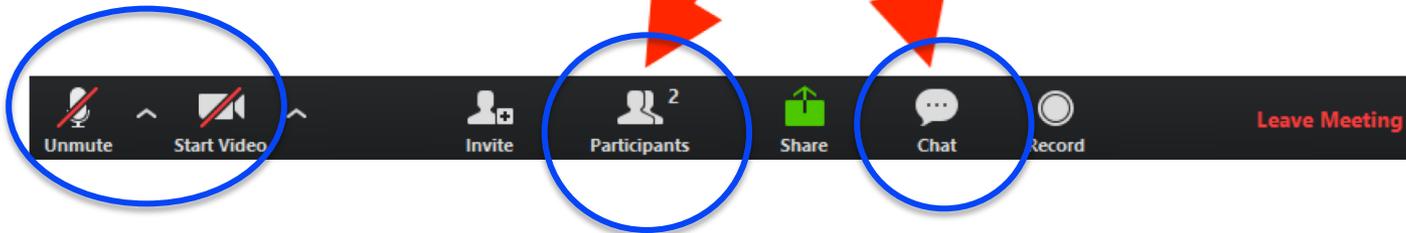
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Recording!

- This presentation is being recorded (only portions)
- We will send the recording, the presentation slides, handouts, and resources to everyone
- The recording will be available for listening on our website



About the Office of Career Planning and Professional Development (OCP&PD)

We serve all students and alumni who are current students or have graduated from the CUNY Graduate Center; our services include:

- **One-on-one career advising sessions** (typically 50 minutes) focused on job search, career concerns, and career self-assessment
- **Workshops and webinars** highlighting career development and job search basics (e.g., writing a CV or resume, the nuts and bolts of the academic job search)
- **Career events** featuring alumni and others from various industries, such as big data, government, and community colleges, to name a few
- **Website** with information and blog posts on a variety of career-related topics, including faculty and non-academic job search advice, information on specific career fields, etc.

OCP&PD Career Resources

Recorded Webinars



A library of approximately 16 previous webinars available for listening – *examples include:*

- Preparing for the Academic Job Market
- How to Network and Build Your Connections
- Mastering the Job Interview

Alumni Aloud Podcast

Interviews with alumni in various fields who share their career journeys and tips for the job search – *examples include:*

- Art History at MoMA
- Economics and Sociology at IBM
- Biology at U.S. Fish and Wildlife



Find at: <https://careerplan.commonsgc.cuny.edu/services>

OCP&PD Career Resources

Versatile PhD

A popular online resource for students/graduates thinking about careers outside of academia – *includes:*

- PhD Career Finder
- Community Panel Discussions
- Membership Directory
- Job Listings



Vault Career Guides

An online resource featuring downloadable career guides on a variety of industries from investment banking to library careers



Find at: <https://careerplan.commonsgc.cuny.edu/tools>

OCP&PD Email Lists

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Webinar Agenda

- What happens when you submit your materials
- Preliminary interviews
- Campus interviews
- Offers
- Or...no offer



“Academe is a peculiar environment. Where else would you hire someone who might spend the next thirty years working down the hall from you? This means that even someone who isn’t a “people person” cares about the search, because they will have to live with the result (and they know this from prior experience).

You want to come across as someone who will be a good colleague.”

<https://careerplan.commons.gc.cuny.edu/2014/11/behind-the-scenes/>

What is a Department Looking For?

Someone who can get tenure at the institution, whatever the requirements may be. Depending on the institution, this means...

- Someone who will be a good colleague.
- Someone who will be a productive scholar.
- Someone who can build a national or international reputation in his/her field.
- Someone who will engage students, perhaps even having a substantial presences in their lives.
- Someone who is willing (even happy) to participate in service.



Before Any Interview, You Will:

Take the time to find out what makes the department and faculty unique:

- “Each institution considers itself to be unique and the faculty there want you to be interested in them. This is why you *must* have questions for the search committee during both your preliminary and on-campus interview. When given the chance to ask questions, do not respond: ‘No, I think I’ve heard what I need to know’ or anything along those lines. Go in with three or four questions that show your interest in the program.”
- “Look up department faculty before interviewing with them. Knowing their names and research areas in advance is important.”

Prepare for Preliminary Interviews

- **Phone interviews**
- **Video interviews**
- **Conference interviews (now virtual)**
 - Your goal here: Being memorable (in a good way).
 - Develop a short version of your research and teaching.
 - Make sure you set up a time to talk that is convenient for you.
 - If you are not a native speaker of English, be aware that that a committee might be evaluating your English skills.
 - Practice (using the same medium as the interview).
 - Have a back-up plan.
 - Never panic.



Questions for Initial Interviews

- Why are you interested in our school and this position?
- Describe your research and publications.
- What are your plans for future research?
- Tell us about your teaching and describe what you do in your classes.
- What would your students say about you?
- How would you teach *this* particular course?
- What is your teaching philosophy?
- What contribution would you make to our department and school community?
- Do you have any questions for us?



Phone/Webcam Interview Prep

- Zoom, Skype, WebEx, GoToMeeting
- First round of interview screening
- Make sure have all information and links
- Test equipment (audio and visual) and platform
- Consider background and lighting
- Check eye level with camera
- Expect general interview questions
- Prepare brief answers
- Prepare questions to ask



During Phone/Webcam Interview

- Choose a quiet location
- Be ready 15 min prior
- Dress professionally
- Minimize view of self
- Turn off notifications
- Pay attention to sound and tone of voices (phone)
- Make eye contact with camera (webcam)
- Smile and watch tone of voice
- Assume an open and confident posture
- Keep notes out of view of camera



Campus Interviews

- Sometimes one day, sometimes two or three.
- You are likely one of three-five final candidates.
- **What to expect:**
 - Job talk (research talk) (and the Q and A afterwards)
 - Meeting the department
 - Meeting administrators
 - Teaching a class
 - Social situations
 - Meeting with graduate students and/or undergraduates



Prepare for Campus Interviews

- Practice your job talk.
- Develop a cocktail party version of your research.
- Prepare to talk about your teaching, your research, your goals, and yourself.
- Know what you're going to wear.
- Before any interview, clarify all arrangements and research the institution and interviewers.



A Sample Interview Schedule

Day One

- 8:30-10--Breakfast meeting with search committee chair and department chair
- 10-11 -- Meet with faculty A
- 11-11:30 -- Campus tour
- 11:30-12:30 -- Lunch with faculty (multiple)
- 1-2:15 -- Teaching demonstration
- 2:30-3:30 -- Meet with faculty B
- 3:30-4:30 -- Meet with faculty C
- 4:30-5:30 – Meet with undergraduate students
- 6 -- Dinner

Day Two

- 10-11 -- Meet with faculty D
- 11-12 -- Meet with faculty E
- 12-12:30 -- Tour of library and campus
- 12:30-1:30 -- Lunch with faculty (multiple)
- 1:30-2:30 -- Meet with dean of school
- 2:30-3 -- Break
- 3-4 -- Research presentation
- 4-4:30 – Closing meeting with search committee chair



Self Presentation

- **Be yourself, but the best possible version of yourself.**
 - You are a colleague.
 - “Fake it till you make it.”
- **Nothing here is casual or informal.**
 - No “informal talks”
 - No “informal meetings”
 - Do not think, “I can be casual.”
- **Think about how you’ll stay at the top of your form.**
- **Bring backups.**
- **If offered a break – take it!**



Strategies

- **Show signs of engagement**
 - Know something about those you're talking with and ask (gently) about their work.
 - Listen to what is said about campus and area. Ask questions based on what you've heard.
 - Uncertain about the location? Praise what you do find interesting/positive.
- **Remember that not everyone is in your field**
 - At smaller institutions in particular, but true in many contexts.
- **Speak positively about those you've worked with**
- **See a gap in the curriculum? Indicate how you can help address it.**
 - Love to teach intro courses? Say it.
- **Ask to meet with students.**
 - Can be useful if a teaching-centric place has failed to give you time with students.

What is a Job Talk?

- It is **presentation of your latest research**, usually about 45 minutes with time for questions afterwards, similar to the type of talk you might see a scholar from another institution give as a part of a seminar series in your department.
- It is a **demonstration of your virtuosity as a scholar and teacher** and your “fit” with the department.
- Many who write on this stress — **it is not an oral exam.**
- Objective: **convince non-specialist faculty to hire you.**



Why is the Job Talk So Important?

- **It is a critical decision-maker threshold**
- **A good job talk** can move you from the bottom of a short list to the top... and a bad one from the top of a short list to the bottom. Why?
 - It gives the department a sense of your strengths as a researcher/scholar.
 - It can show them how you teach in the classroom.
 - It also shows them how you will represent yourself and the institution/department internally and externally – at conferences and to the public.
(This is important for tenure at most institutions.)

Common to All Good Job Talks

- A **clear, logical argument**, usually focused on **one aspect of your work**
- Make it a **single narrative – a story**
- A talk that is **accessible** to people with a wide range of expertise
- An **engaging presentation style**
- **Innovation**



Find out Beforehand

- **How long** your talk should be (and does that include Q&A? NB: never exceed time limit)
- Who will be in the **audience**?
- What is the **technology set up** in the seminar room?
- Will you have a **short break** before your presentation to prepare?
- When is the talk **scheduled**? (!)



Goals for Each Part of Your Talk

Intro:

- You should clearly introduce your topic/question and what you are planning to do in this presentation.

Body:

- Address your talk to an audience with a range of specialties.
- Have a clear, logical argument.

Towards a Conclusion:

- State very strongly the details of your work
- Pitch to people who know your niche towards the end, but in language that is accessible to the audience.

Closing:

- Tell the audience how this fits into a larger project, and explain where this work will go in the future. A COMPELLING FUTURE VISION— advertising you as a faculty member there.
- Then, neatly and clearly restate your main points.

Teaching Demo

- **Can take the place of a research talk** in some institutions. Some places have you do both.
- **May be to an existing class or a group of faculty pretending to be students.**
- **Talk to the TLC (cuny.is/teaching)**
 - Organization and confidence
 - Awareness of time
 - Mix of modes
 - Purposeful use of technology (Luke Waltzer)



PRACTICE



- Out loud !!
- With your faculty and student colleagues
- Many times (*organize a departmental colloquium*)
- Get the timing right—don't exceed the limit.
- Provide for Q&A time
- Your supporting materials—are they clear? Do they enhance your narrative or distract from it?
- Your PowerPoint (or Prezi, etc.) Can I read it if I'm sitting in the back of the room? Too much detail? You should probably project it somewhere, stand at the back of the room, and see for yourself.

Please Do Not Think This...

- “I’ve had years of experience in the classroom here at CUNY. I’m really comfortable in front of groups. I don’t need to practice my job talk.”
- “I’m really good at conference presentations and pretty quick on my feet. I don’t need to practice my job talk.”
- “I’ve never taught this in my classroom, but love the idea of trying this complicated new lesson for my teaching demo. It will impress the committee for sure.”

The job talk/teaching demo are different beasts. You must practice.

Be clear, be organized – be the expert.

Grace under Pressure

Don't get rattled:

- By technology—be able to give the presentation without if necessary.
- By others' looks or expressions during your talk.
- By others' distracted-ness during your talk (sleeping, gadgets, leaving the room)
- By an aggressive or contentious line of questioning. Do your best.
 - “Thank you for raising that question. It's true I haven't examined Z in depth. Here's my very good reason for why I approached the topic this way. I'll examine Z in the future.”
- Develop a strategy to forestall excessive interruptions.
- At the conclusion, thank your hosts.

What to Ask



- **Faculty**
 - Ask about their work, the campus, their teaching, the area, the students.
- **Department chair**
 - Ask about goals for the department, curricular changes, tenure process.
- **Administrators/Deans/Provosts**
 - Ask about their vision for the school/institution.

You Receive an Offer

- Probably by phone, though perhaps by email.
- You may be tempted to accept on the spot. You should resist this temptation.
- Thank the chair for the offer—with enthusiasm. Ask for a bit of time to reflect.
- Ask about the “offer process.”
- Set up a second time to talk.
- Reflect on your needs... *in the context of the institution.* Prepare for your next conversation.

What You Might Negotiate

- Decision date
- Start date
- Salary
- Teaching load and teaching schedule
- Moving expenses/housing help
- Job-hunting help for partner or spouse
- Research assistants
- Computer resources
- Summer research funding
- Travel funds and conference expenses



Wrapping up your Search

When You Have Accepted a Job

- If terms of the offer changed during negotiating, get a new offer letter.
- Thank everybody.
- Notify other institutions that interviewed you and withdraw from the search.
- Notify your network of contacts that you have accepted an offer.
- **FINISH YOUR RESEARCH. GRADUATE.**

When You Don't Have a Job Offer

- Thank all who helped you.
- Keep working on your research.
- Talk with your advisor and others about how you can strengthen your candidacy.

Preparing to Start Your New Faculty Position

- Begin now to **think of yourself as a faculty member**; you are the one responsible for your career.
- Know that **your first year will be challenging** regardless of how well prepared you are. That said, do as much as you can to be ready when fall arrives.
- **Set realistic goals** for your teaching and research – we’ve often heard new faculty members say, “don’t aim for perfection that first year, just get through it.”
- **Keep an open line of communication** with your chair so that you know what is expected of you.
- **Protect your time.** Make sure that you carve out time to do the things that will get you tenure at your new institution.
- Cultivate relationships with **mentors**.

The Dream

Assistant Professor → Associate Professor



Full Professor

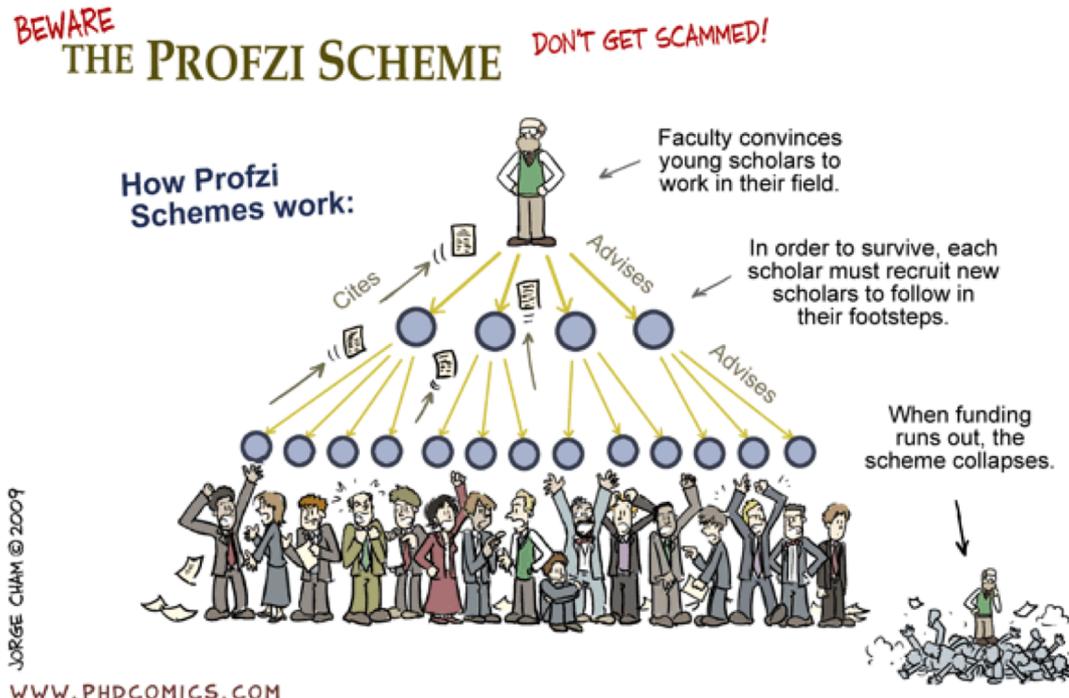


WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

The Reality

The academic job search is tough:

- It will take up a good deal of your time.
- It will stress you out.
- You will likely have to do it more than once.
- Results are not guaranteed.



Taming the Stress

- Be in touch with your advisors and actively seek their support (as much as they are willing/able to give).
 - Develop a strategy for dealing with the difficult ones.
- Cultivate your support network outside of academe.
- Control your search. Set limits. Develop a Plan B.
 - Will I go on the market again? How many times am I willing to do so?
 - How many times am I willing to move?
 - Are there personal considerations (partner/children) that might affect this decision?
 - When will I look at other career possibilities? What might those be?
- Give it your all, and if you really don't want to do this, don't.

QUESTIONS?

