



Career Advancement Toolkit

The Academic Job Search

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build your career, shape the future

The Academic Job Search



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The standard timeline

➤ Early fall:

Decide what you are looking for
Put together job packet
Seek advice & support of advisors
Request letters of recommendation
Search and apply

➤ Late fall - winter:

Continue applying
Prepare for interviews
Prepare for job talk
Ask advisors to call on your behalf

➤ Winter - spring:

Campus interviews
Negotiate offer(s)

Knowing what you want and need

- Balance of research, clinical practice and/or teaching
- Level of competition and expectations
- Resources to do your science
- Geographic preferences (or restrictions)
- Partner/family needs
- Personal needs

Types of academic institutions

- Doctorate-granting Universities (260+)
- Master's Colleges and Universities (600+)
- Baccalaureate Colleges (600+)
- Associate's Colleges, Special Focus Institutions, Tribal Colleges (2300+)



<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/Classification/index.htm>

What are search committees looking for?

- It depends on the "search", but they will likely consider:
 - Your track record
 - Your skill set - research, clinical, and/or teaching
 - Your "fit" with department needs
 - Your ability to write and get grants
 - Your ability to teach and mentor
 - You

Where can you find out about positions?

- From your mentor and scientific network
- From relevant professional societies
- In print or on-line journals
- On-line, including:
 - <http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/>
 - www.newscientistjobs.com
 - <http://www.academic360.com>
 - <http://www.aamc.org/jobboard/start.htm>

Materials requested

Survey of 30 life science-related faculty postings:



- Cover letter (30)
- Curriculum Vitae (30)
- Research plan (22)
- Teaching statement (18)
- Letters of reference (14)
- List of references (11)
- Transcripts (9)
- Representative reprints (5)
- Teaching evals, sample syllabi (3)

The cover letter

- Goals:
 - introduce yourself
 - highlight your accomplishments
 - state your broad research goals
 - briefly describe approaches you will use
 - state why you are a good "fit"
 - provide easy to find contact information
- 1-1.5 pages in length; longer in some social science disciplines
- Tailored to the position
- No bullets or other organizational formatting
- Must be written well

The parts of your cover letter

- Opening paragraph
 - Why you are writing
 - How you heard about job
- Middle paragraph(s)
 - Highlights past accomplishments
 - Describes where you are heading
 - Supports your "fit" for the position
 - Explains your interest in the position
- Closing paragraph
 - Explain enclosures
 - offer to provide additional info

Tailoring the cover letter

- Position is primarily research:
 - Describe your research interests and accomplishments
 - Summarize briefly what you hope to accomplish
 - Express interest in teaching, mentoring, & service
- Position is primarily teaching:
 - Describe your teaching interests and accomplishments
 - Discuss how your research relates to your teaching goals
 - (Describe how you will blend research & teaching)
- Position is primarily clinical
 - Highlight your clinical experience and certifications
 - Discuss previous research and teaching experience
 - Describe how you will blend clinical and research goals

Your CV

- Name & address (no personal information)
- All higher education, with degrees & dates
- Clinical certifications, with dates
- Professional positions, with dates (& brief description)
- Honors and awards (pre- and postdoctoral)
- Grant funding
- Leadership and service
- Teaching and mentoring experience
- Invited presentations and seminars
- Publications - name bolded, co-first authors easily identified

Letters of recommendation

- 3 or 4; typically your PhD advisor, postdoc advisor & collaborator(s)
- Ask far in advance - be sure the letter will be VERY strong
- Provide your CV and other helpful information
- Provide information on the positions
- Follow-up after 1 month
- Consider providing letters even if not requested

The research plan

- 2 - 4 pages
- Short sections focused on major research themes
- Looks forward more than backward
- Proper paragraph format and readable layout
- May personalize for each position
- Include both published & preliminary data
- Figures can be helpful, but not required
- Carefully edit & get significant input from others
- Think about how plans "fit" grant applications

What you are trying to convey

- Importance of your research
- Focus
- Independence
- Creativity
- Sophistication
- Realism
- Clarity
- Fundability

Common criticisms

- Overly ambitious
- Lacks clear direction
- Lacks a big picture focus
- Doesn't address how the proposal fits with needs of department
- Requires facilities/equipment not easily provided
- Poor writing, structure, spelling, grammar

See:
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/previous_issues/articles/1820/writing_a_research_plan/

Teaching Statements

"A statement of your personal teaching philosophy and goals...

...and the strategies and methods used to attain those goals"

What to include

- A description of your teaching goals in the classroom and/or in the lab
- A description of how you believe learning occurs in specific situations
- Specific ways you evaluate student learning
- Areas of instruction that you would like to learn more about or are beginning to use in the classroom (collaborative learning groups, problem-based learning, the case approach)
- MOST IMPORTANT: Provide specific examples to back up your "talk"

Two-bodies and other personal issues

- Typically best left out of cover letters, but should be discussed early in the interview process
- If family-friendly policies matter to you, ask several potential colleagues and students about this
- Be open and honest - you will spend lots of time with these people and need to know you will be supported and appreciated for who you are
- Understand that some questions should not be asked, but they might be; be prepared to answer them

Academic Search Worksheet: Things to Consider

About the institution and department:

- Balance of teaching, research, and clinical responsibilities
- University/department mission
- Type and amount of teaching expected; educational level and quality of students you will interact with
- Type and amount of lab mentoring expected; quality of the students and fellows you will be working with
- Type and amount of administrative responsibilities and service expected
- Typical expectations of the department vis-à-vis funding, research productivity and tenure
- General environment (sink-or-swim, collegial, competitive)
- Student and faculty diversity
- Areas of research strength and focus
- Quality of research and core facilities
- Emphasis on interdisciplinary research; institutional support for collaborative research
- Number of training grants and other support for graduate education

About you:

- Geographic preference
- City, urban, or suburban
- Your personal needs
- Your partner's job needs
- Your partner's personal needs
- Your family's needs