The Academic Job Search: Preparing Your Job Package
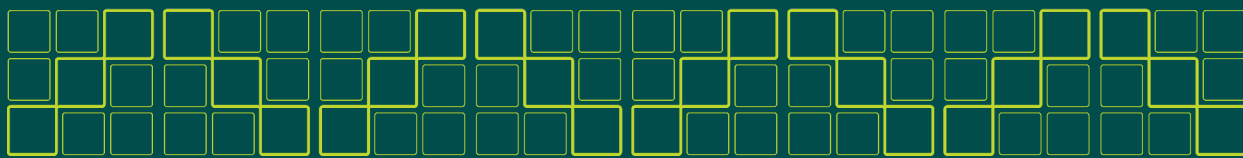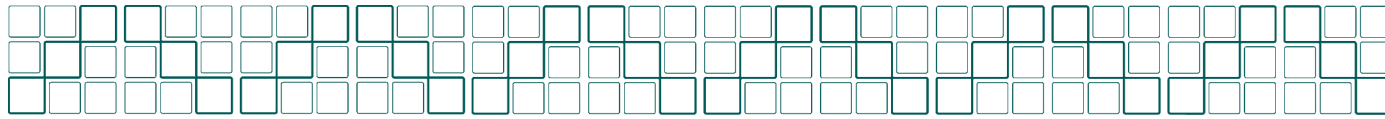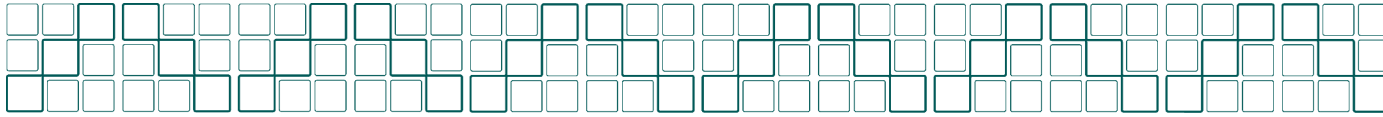
Knowing What You Want & Need

- Balance of research, clinical practice and/or teaching

- Type of institution

- Level of competition and expectations

- Resources to do your work

- Geographic preferences (or restrictions)

- Partner and family needs

- Personal needs

The Standard Timeline

- **Early fall:**
  - ❑ Decide what you are looking for
  - ❑ Seek advice & support of advisors
  - ❑ Put together job packet
  - ❑ Request letters of recommendation
  - ❑ Search and apply

- **Late fall - winter:**
  - ❑ Continue applying
  - ❑ Prepare for interviews
  - ❑ Prepare for job talk
  - ❑ Ask mentors to make calls on your behalf

- **Winter - spring:**
  - ❑ Campus interviews
  - ❑ Negotiate offer(s)
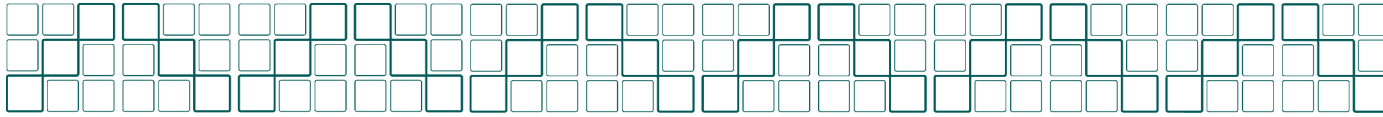
Finding Positions

- From your mentor and scientific network

- From relevant professional societies

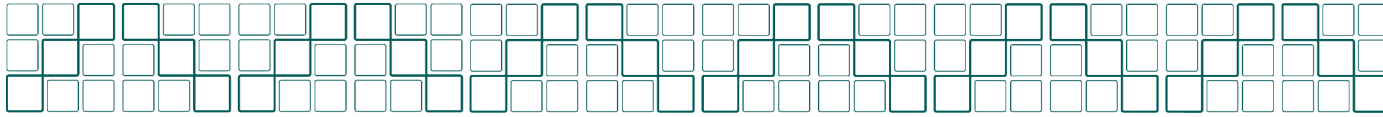- In print or on-line journals

- On-line, including:

  http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/

  www.newscientistjobs.com

  http://www.academic360.com

  http://www.aamc.org/jobboard/start.htm

What Search Committees Look For

- A track record of excellence -- in research, teaching, and/ or patient care

- A strong skill set -- relevant to your goals

- A good "fit" with the needs of the department

- Excellent communication skills

- Evidence of strong teaching and mentoring skills

- Evidence of leadership

- Evidence that you will be a good colleague

Application Materials

- **Almost always requested:**
  - ☐ Cover letter
  - ☐ Curriculum Vitae
  - ☐ Research and/or teaching plan/statement
  - ☐ Letters of reference/list of referees

- **Sometimes requested:**
  - ☐ Representative reprints
  - ☐ Transcripts
  - ☐ Teaching evaluations, sample syllabi (teaching portfolio)
  - ☐ Diversity statement

- **Follow instructions for electronic submission of application materials**
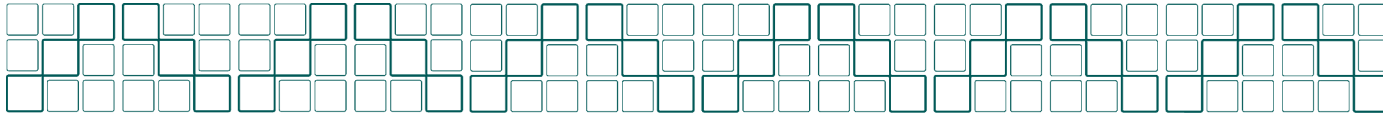
The Average Search Committee:

- Tenured and tenure-track faculty - in and outside of the hiring department

- Varies in size and power

- Members are often over-committed and very busy

- Inherently skeptical and critical

- May only be peripherally interested in your work

- Trying to get a quick picture of you and your research

- Looking for YOU to make their job easier
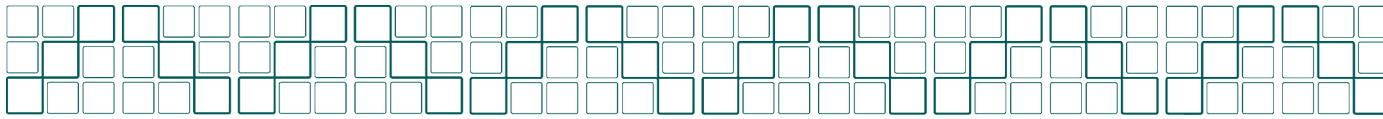
The Cover Letter

- Goals:
  - ❑ introduce yourself
  - ❑ highlight your accomplishments
  - ❑ state your broad research goals
  - ❑ state why you are a good "fit"
  - ❑ provide easy to find contact information
- 1-1.5 pages in length; longer in some disciplines
- Tailored to the position
- Well written - no bullets or other organizational formatting
- Not the time to bring up two-body or other personal issues

Sections of a 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
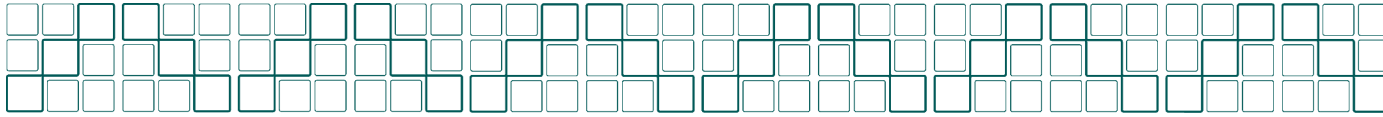
Your CV

- Contact information (professional)

- Education

- Clinical certifications

- Professional positions (& brief description)

- Honors and awards (pre- and postdoctoral)

- Grant funding

- Leadership and service

- Teaching and mentoring experience

- Invited presentations and seminars

- Publications

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
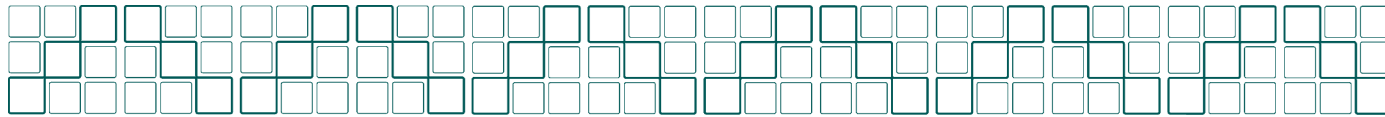
Goals of a Research Plan

- Get readers excited about:

  - You

  - Your research

  - What you are going to do

- Highlight your successes and convince them there are many more to come

- Make the reader want to learn more about you
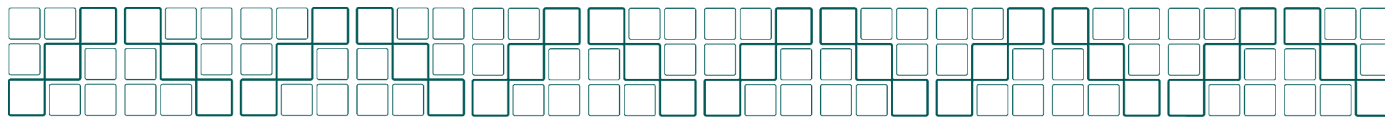
Research Plan - Format & Content

- Average length is 2 - 4 pages

- Narrative written in active voice, first person

- Articulates what you will do and why

- Helps committee see how your plans fit grant applications

- Helpful to:
  - ❑ Start with a stand-alone overview
  - ❑ Use section headings focused on major research themes to guide the reader
  - ❑ Include one or two figures
  - ❑ Personalize to the position

- Make it easy to read - wide margins with11/12pt font; bold key points

- Carefully edit & get significant input from others
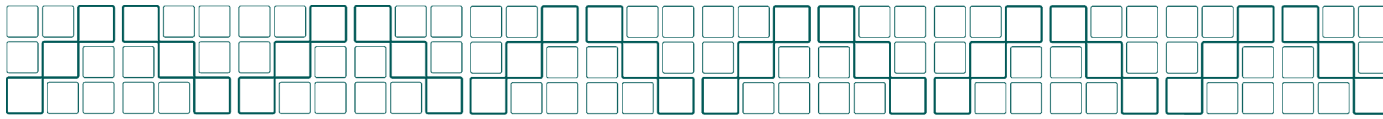
Strategies For Writing Your Research Plan

- Consider major accomplishments that you want everyone to know about

- Think how you will develop your work over the next 3 - 5 years

- Then think bigger to help refine your long-term direction

- Look hard for flaws and technical challenges; consider alternatives

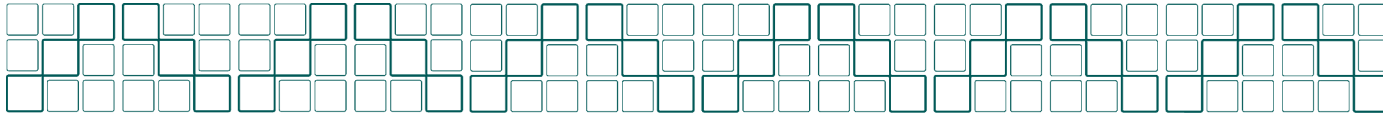- Write an "executive summary" that pulls it all together
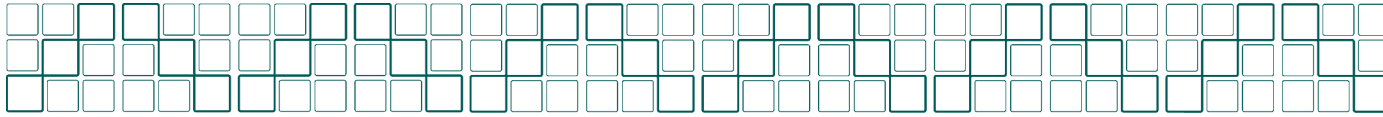
What You Are Trying To Convey in Your Research Plan

- Importance of your research

- Focus

- Independence

- Creativity

- Sophistication

- Realism

- Clarity

- Fundability

Common Criticisms of Research Plans

- Overly ambitious

- No clear direction

- Work not placed in a broader context

- Poorly written

- Doesn't address fit with the department

- Requires facilities/equipment not easily available

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

Teaching Statements

- A narrative that includes:

  - your personal beliefs of teaching and learning
  - a description of how you teach
  - a justification for why you teach that way

- May be part of a larger teaching portfolio

  - Class syllabi
  - Student reviews
 - Details of mentorship and non-classroom teaching
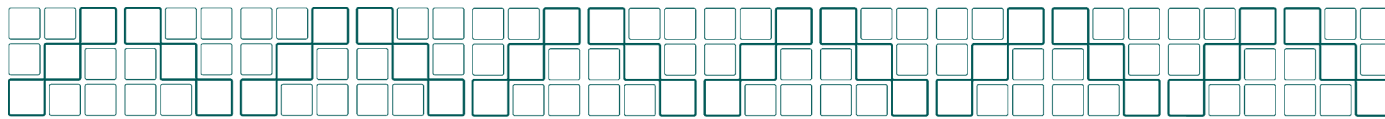
Successful Teaching Statements:

- Show clear evidence that you "walk the walk"
- Are student-centered
- Are attuned to differences in learning styles and abilities
- Demonstrate your ability to reflect about your role as a teacher
- Convey your enthusiasm for teaching
- Are well-written, clear and jargon-free
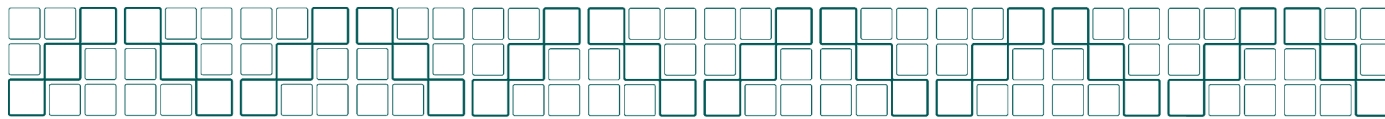
Questions To Consider: Classroom Teaching

- How do I believe students learn best?
- What types of assignments and classroom activities do I use to help students learn?
- How do I evaluate if students are making progress?
- How do I address different learning styles in the classroom?
- How do I help students understand the implications and significance of what they are learning?
- How do I insure that students feel welcome in my class?
- How do I address cultural, social, and/or gender issues in the classroom?
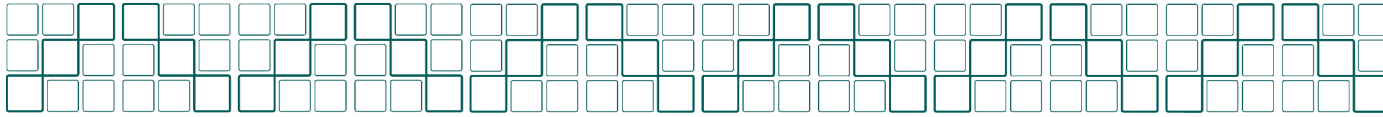- What have I learned from prior teaching experiences?
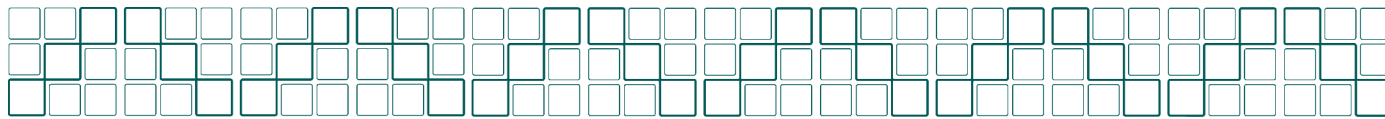
Questions To Consider: Lab-based Teaching

- How do I believe students learn best?
- How do I organize interactions with my students?
- How do I select and shape student projects?
- How do I evaluate students progress?
- How do I address the range of learning styles among students in my research group?
- How do I help students understand the implications or significance of what they're learning?
- How do I address ethical issues and help students appreciate the role of research in society?
- How do I insure that all students feel welcome in my research group?
- What have I learned from prior experiences?

Some Details About Teaching Statements

- Generally 1 - 2 pages in length

- No standard formatting or required content

- Should reflect **your** teaching style and personality - write in the first-person, present tense

- Should show that you have considered the student body at the institution

- Important to give examples throughout

Common Criticisms of Teaching Statements

- Lacks experience to back-up ideas

- Assumes all students learn the same way

- Does not reflect the needs of the students/department

- Demonstrates rigid views of learning

- Does not show ability to self-reflect and learn

- Research goals are inconsistent with student needs

- Poorly written
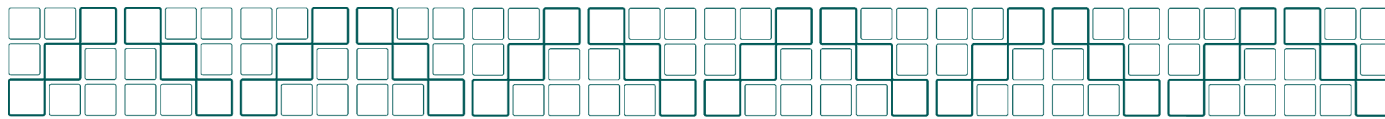
NIH Resources

- Other Academic CAT Track lectures - here and on other campuses

- IC and OITE writing, grantsmanship, pedagogy, and leadership courses

- Videocasts of prior OITE workshops (training.nih.gov)
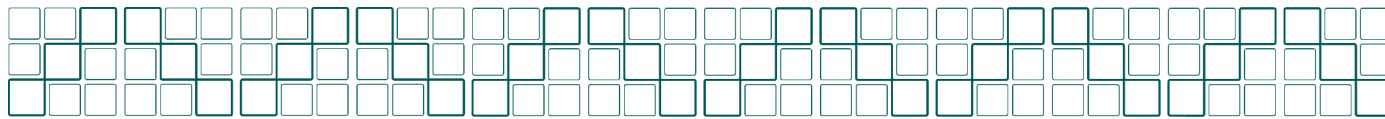
Contact Me

- For examples of successful job packets from NIH fellows:
    - Email milgrams@od.nih.gov
    - Subject = SEND EXAMPLES
- To get feedback on your job materials:
    - Email milgrams@od.nih.gov
    - attach your files as a SINGLE MS WORD document
    - Use your last name in the file name
    - Subject = MATERIAL REVIEW