TIPS FOR THE PHD JOB MARKET

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Will be available at

http://www.econ.iastate.edu/graduate-student-placement-resources
3 General Categories for Academic Institutions

1. Ph. D. granting institutions – Research Focused (Focus of this talk)

2. State universities or college regional campuses
   - Need to have proven teaching effectiveness
   - May need to give class seminar in addition to or in combination with the research job talk

3. Small universities or colleges offering a liberal arts curriculum
   - Extremely value teaching - philosophy, approach etc.
   - Need proof of interest in teaching and effectiveness
   - Often prefer candidates with liberal arts background

*Each institution will be interested in different qualities in it’s job applicants.
What the Committee is Looking For

• Credentials (Skills and accomplishments)
  • This will makes sure you get an interview from 200 applicants

• Motivation (Why them and clear career goals)
  • Liberal arts care even more about it
  • Future research plans as opposed to what you have done

• Fit (Potential for work environment and collegiality)
  • Interpersonal skills are extremely important in flyouts, even after getting the job
General tips

• Your market begins before your fifth year

• Take advantage of networking opportunities
  • Conferences (actually talk to people)
  • Visiting speakers
  • Summer schools

• Your reputation precedes you
  • Hopefully in a good way

• Every interaction can influence job prospects
Timeline: Overview

- 3rd years:
  - Third year paper
  - What will be your job market paper?
  - Will you have more papers? A publication?

- 4th years:
  - Oral exam
  - Why is this a good JMP?
  - In what areas are you an expert? (policy, data, methodology, teaching?)

- 5th years+:
  - Job market
  - Can’t change the facts now
  - A test of how well you answered the above questions and how you package your answers
Timeline: Job Market Year

• Early summer:
  • Get serious about JMP (doesn’t mean start it now)
  • Finalize CV, statements, etc
  • Have a sense of what you need to do to finish JMP
  • Confirm letter writers
• Late Summer/early fall:
  • Get JMP in top form, **schedule practice talks**
  • Make hotel/plane reservations
  • Give JMP to advisors
• Sep-Dec:
  • Check JOE/EJM/etc, talk with advisors on where to apply
• Early Sep-Oct: finalize packet
• Mid-Nov or earlier: send packets
• Dec: **schedule mock interviews**
Role of Advisor/Committee/Faculty

• Provide feedback on paper and presentation

• Provide info on openings and interest from employers

• Contact potential employers about students on the market

• Mock interviews

• **Your role:** keep advisors in the loop on interviews, flyouts, offers, interests
The Job Market Paper

• The JMP is very important, very little can make up for a weak one
  • Check with advisor about including a second paper

• Make the abstract and intro perfect: write and rewrite and rewrite
  • Goal is to appeal to many economists
  • Ask different people to give you comments on these parts

• Consider the title

• Goldin and Katz have good writing tips, read and use them

• JMP != a publication, show off your skills
Questions you need to answer before the market

• What ARE you? ➔ # of jobs, # of competitors

• Where do you want to go? Where do you not want to go?

• Are you willing to take a postdoc? Visiting position? Move abroad?

• Are you ready for the market?
Finding out about jobs

- Types of jobs: research, teaching, private and public sector
- Start early with the JOE, especially ag folks
- Jobs are continually posted on JOE/EJM
  - Record listing information carefully the first time (i.e., what you have to do to submit, deadline, what they want)
- There may be other sites for jobs in your field
- Have a rough personal ranking of schools
- Keep a list of schools you’re unsure about applying to
Preparing Applications

- CV
- Research statement/dissertation abstract
- Teaching statement/evaluations
- Cover letter templates
  - Different for research vs teaching vs industry
  - Customize for idiosyncratic reasons
- Let letter writers know **early**
- Personal website
- Transcripts
- Example of course syllabi
- Professional photo
- Keep all of this organized
Applications

- **BE ORGANIZED**

- I (Ivan) used an excel file
  - Mail merge

- Expect this to take a lot of time, you won’t get a lot else done

- Make sure your letters are getting submitted

- Non-ag students: send out 100+ applications ($MC \approx 0$, $MB > 0$)

- Ag students:
Making Hotel / Travel Arrangements

• Early sept: make hotel and travel arrangements
  • Pop quiz: when’s the first day to reserve hotels?

• Consider delays getting to Chicago (arrive early)

• May get interviews late, or rescheduled if sick (leave late Monday)
  • Meetings are Friday to Sunday

• Get a flu shot

• Book hotels as soon as humanly possible (right when the site opens)
After applications

- Set up $N$ mock interviews
  - $N$ is strictly positive, definitely more than 1, probably more than 2
  - Start with classmates, maybe advisor, then do more with non-advisors, faculty not in your field
  - Be able to talk about your research naturally

- Finalize paper and presentation (flyouts may come early)

- Send “signals” through the AEA website
  - Places you would go (and they would plausibly hire you), but they don’t know this
Scheduling interviews

- Calls start coming the week or two after Thanksgiving.
- Be ready for phone calls during the day (carry a notebook with your schedule).
- Keep your advisor updated.
- Make an excel file for scheduling.
- Leave at least 30 minutes between interviews unless in the same hotel.
- Be strategic with order.
- EJM’s website is nice for scheduling but not used by everyone.
- Remember: you’re a potential colleague, not a grad student.
AEA/ASSA Meetings

• Know where to go ahead of time
  • Hotel (walk or cab?)
  • What’s the room number?
• Leave plenty of time
• Have food, water, internet
• A professional way to take notes

• Be on time
  • Knock if they don’t open the door, right on the minute

• Be polite and professional
  • Economists are everywhere

• Look professional
  • Suit, no backpacks
Interviews

- 2 minute summary, 5-10 minute summary (all nested)
  - Expect interruptions and adjust
  - You’re having a conversation

- Questions about non-JMP and future research

- Teaching

- “Do you have any questions?”
  - Not necessarily about getting info

- What are interviews for?
  - Looking for a colleague, no bad surprises

- Know your interviewers, be prepared for them to (not) know you

- BE ENTHUSIASTIC
Flyouts

• Invitations start right after the meetings: leverage flyouts

• Usually 1-2 days:
  • 1-on-1 interviews with faculty/dean/provost/students
  • Job talk
  • Dinner, city tour, etc

• Info: flight, visa, hotel, transport, etc

• Always be polite and professional

• Own a nice winter coat

• You are not a grad student

• BE ENTHUSIASTIC
Job Talk

- Perfect the first 5-15 minutes, this will shape what people take away
- Early on summarize results, approach, and why it’s important
- Consider your audience
- No long literature reviews
- Don’t be defensive
- Know the time
- Back up the presentation
- Jesse Shapiro has presentation tips
Flyout miscellaneous

• Have some idea of what’s happening in the real world
• Expect random questions, weird people
• Know fun facts about your research
• Be prepared for schedule changes
• Be climate and illness ready
• Know your drinking limit
• Travel light and smart
• Send thank yous
Offers

• These may be slow to come for institutional reasons

• Usually includes salary, research support, teaching requirements, moving budget, campus visit

• Negotiate once you have an offer
  • Non-salary components are easier (e.g. teaching or start-up budget)
  • Be courteous, if you have multiple offers drop ones you would never take

• Don’t rush to say yes to early offers, you have large option values to waiting
General advice

• Don’t get flustered
  • People ask strange things
  • Weird things happen

• Sell yourself and your field as an asset to the department
  • Complementarities with other fields?
  • What can you teach?

• Don’t be controversial

• A good/bad interview (from your perspective) means nothing about you

• Always get dessert
Recap

• JMP
  • Read advice from Goldin and Katz

• Interviews
  • 2 and 5-10 minute summaries
  • Other current and future research

• Job market talk
  • Read advice from Shapiro

• Be organized, pay attention to details

• Be friendly/enthusiastic, show you can be a good colleague

• The process can be (sort of) fun if you’re prepared
AAEA – Another Booming Market for Ag-Related Students
July 30-Aug 1, 2017

- Fields: Agribusiness, food, ag-environ, extension, postdoc
- More and more postings

- Format:
  - More informal – 1-2 interviewers
  - Typically 30 minutes
  - You only need to submit CV on AAEA Job Board
  - Some schools have a set of questions that they ask everyone
  - You may even get another interview through meeting with someone at the reception

- Flyouts: Nov, schools try to scoup the good candidates before they go to ASSA
International Students Who Want a US Academic Position

• Expect more judgment and skepticism especially for non-native speakers, especially from Asia

• While at graduate schools, try your best to improve your oral and written English
  • Take a writing class
  • Get a professional editor for your dissertation
  • Watch CNN, not sitcoms

• Network at conferences, break the introvert stereotype

• Ask questions at seminars – at first, all questions are stupid

• Get a good teaching evaluation

• It is your responsibility to convince people to hire you!
International Students & Students Interested in the International Academia – HK, China etc.

• Your interviewers may still suffer jet lag so it is your responsibility to light them up

• Don’t feel bad if you did not do well, Chinese schools like to judge based on resumes and advisor names

• Rising standards of recruiting and tenure for Chinese market

• Occasionally the interviewers speak Chinese

• Be sure to apply to your alma mater

• You may not have to do flyouts to get an offer
Lessons Learnt from the job market - Wendong

• Enjoy the spotlight on you and your research
  • Very rare

• Relax, network – you will find lifelong colleagues, friends from other candidates, and the interviewers

• Practice, practice, and practice
  • Job talks
    • I did five times: fellow candidates, 2nd year with fresh econometric knowledge, advisor, committee, your family etc.
    • Anticipate every question and try to come up w a good answer

• Mock interviews!
Some additional resources (Dept Intranet)

- Sample interview questions
- General econ job market tips and discussions on the process
- Writing tips for papers and dissertations
- Sample spreadsheet for you organize job applications and reference letters
- All these are in the folder that will be shared with everyone

Activate NCFDD institutional sub account