

How to Prepare a Faculty Application Package
Postdoc Lunch & Learn
May 16th, 2018

Panel members:

- Dr. Doug Christensen, Professor in Bioengineering
- Dr. Gabrielle Kardon, Associate Professor in Human Genetics
- Dr. Michael Kay, Professor in Biochemistry
- Dr. Megan Williams, Assistant Professor in Neurobiology & Anatomy
- Dr. Holly Johnson, Adjunct Assistant Professor in Graphic Design, Higher Education Institutional Consultant
- Tara Putnam, Graduate Teaching Asst (E), Kinesiology

Tips from Dr. Doug Christensen on the faculty position application:

Cover Letter:

- Should be short, less than one page
- Should highlight what's unique about you
- Should be tailored to the institution you re applying to

Research Statement:

- Background, Significance, Results
- Highlight your contribution to your research
- Highlight your ideas for future work

Teaching Statement:

- Teaching part may be the most valuable and satisfactory contribution
- Discuss your teaching philosophy, experience
- Mention the courses at the university you are applying to that you could teach

Research Seminar:

- Could be the weakest part of a candidate's application
- Ask the Chairman of the Committee/Department ahead of time:
 - Who comprises the audience? Tailor your talk to the audience, don't overestimate your audience. This is a big mistake people make.
 - Time limits for the talk, how many minutes for questions?
- Ahead of your talk, rehearse it with someone with experience in recruiting faculty
- Discuss in your talk the background and significance of your proposed research
- You will be judged on your presentation skills as well - demonstrate right amount of confidence
- Discuss 5 years of your future work
- Tailor research results to the audience - undergrads/graduate students of diverse disciplines etc.
- Include some slides that demonstrate the depth of your work

One-on-one interviews:

- Know and prepare to discuss the specialty areas of the interviewing committee
- Your answers should be concise, specific. Be confident and enthusiastic, but not overbearing.
- Be ready to summarize your research in case members of the committee did not see your research seminar. You can even prepare a 1-page summary and print it out for them.
- Be ready to discuss what classes you may want to teach if you think the position assigns importance to your teaching.

- Prepare to ask the committee some questions
- Don't take negative sections from the committee personally**
Realize that teaching may be your biggest contribution

Different parts of the application/interview:

- Cover Letter
- CV
- Research Statement
- Teaching Statement
- Research Seminar
- Chalk Talk - very important
- Lunch with trainees
- If applying for a teaching position, may be asked to teach a short 15 min class at the undergrad/graduate level.

The Chalk Talk:

- Audience: mostly only faculty, maybe postdocs, considered closed and confidential
- Chalk talks may be the hardest part of the interview.
- Some committees allow a few slides, so ask ahead of time.
- Important to note that slides may serve as a crutch if you don't know how to use them to deliver your talk effectively but will serve your purpose if you do.
- If you want, and are allowed, to have slides, have about a maximum of 5 slides, but not just slides. Do not have just description and text on your slides. For example, you could use slides to show a diagram that's really difficult to draw on the board. If you want to show a pathway, you could also just draw it out on the chalk board before your talk.
- Your chalk talk should render your vision as a scientist for your work, and clearly demonstrate your role as well as independence in your research.
- Your proposed work should be feasible and comprise rational experimental strategies to see your vision through.
- Think of your chalk talk as a conversation and consider it as a privilege that will enable you to also gauge if your audience would make for fitting colleagues.
- Don't be defensive, too set in your ways or sound hyper-rehearsed.
- Your chalk talk can discuss general thoughts or specifically what your R01 will be during the first few years in your faculty position.

Most important parts of your application used to short-list you for an interview:

- Cover letter

Fellowships obtained - American citizens are expected to have at least one fellowship. A fellowship is highly recommended for international citizens, but people do understand that it can be difficult to get these.

1st author publications - if there's only one, even if it's high-impact, it's better if it didn't take 7 years to get it. But it's important to have at least one. Also, **DO NOT** switch the order of co-authors. It is generally thought to be tantamount to defrauding the committee and will disqualify your candidacy. If there are 4 1st author publications and they are low-impact but are related in topic, this is seen as a good thing, because it demonstrates vision and a comprehensive thought-process. Mentioning something as submitted doesn't matter

unless you include (if allowed to) the actual manuscript if you think it's really critical for your chalk talk/future plans. You could also publish it on BioRxiv.org
Committee spends about 10-15mins per application for the first review, so make sure what you want to most crucially say is readily visible - read cover letter.

There are no standards generally on how many applications are successful/which ones are. It depends on how many positions are open, how many applications are received and whether they are looking for specialists in something particular. Approx. 20-30 applications are usually discussed and result in 3-6 interviews.

- Teaching

Teaching can be an important part of your application/talking point in your interview if the position involves teaching as a major part of the job description/is at a teaching-focused institution. You need to ascertain this before you apply. The Center for Teaching Excellence offers several resources. CTLE offers workshops on Fridays during the academic year, reviews of syllabi and teaching outcomes, and feedback on your teaching. You can find more info on their website (<http://ctle.utah.edu>) or visit them on the first floor of the library.

Time as postdoc Vs output:

Usually, the optimal length of time as a postdoc should be 5 years. 7 years as a postdoc can be hard to sell to the committee.

Biology:

3 years as a postdoc resulting in a Nature paper - good

7 years as a postdoc resulting in a Nature paper - concerning

English/math/physics departments - 2 years is the optimal length for a postdoc

Other things to note:

- Changing fields in your postdoc is ok as long as each postdoc was productive, and as long as you can tell your story convincingly.
- Do not say anything negative or mention personal details in any part of your application.
- CV should be approx. 2 pages, but you can include an appendix if needed.
- Don't include high school details or skills like MSWord, family status, hobbies etc.
- Focus your CV on awards, fellowships, papers, teaching experience
- Make sure you find people who can recognize your individual contributions to write your recommendation letters.
- At least 1 good recommendation letter is essential.
- Having no recommendation letters from your PhD advisor or a significant postdoc could be a problem, which needs to be addressed in your application.
- No number of middle author papers can make up for a lack of any first author papers.
- Skype interviews are beginning to gain popularity and comprise usually of a set number of questions.