

FINDING YOUR FIRST TEACHING POSITION IN ACADEME

As you may know, in today's competitive job market, having a master's degree or Ph.D does not guarantee employment. In fact, because there has been an increase in the number of individuals graduating with similar credentials, competition is greater than ever. That is why it is so critical for you to be prepared for what you are about to begin...the academic job search.

The purpose of this handout is to assist you in managing the process from beginning to end. The following information will be discussed:

- assessing your abilities and interests
- researching your discipline
- gathering the necessary credentials
- preparing a curriculum vitae
- identifying opportunities
- preparing for the interview

KNOW YOURSELF

Before you begin the actual job search, it is important to think about your:

- professional skills
- academic interests
- personal values
- professional goals

What are your areas of strength? At what level do you want to teach? Where do you want to teach? Do you want to teach in a large, urban setting or a small, private, Catholic institution in the suburbs? at a community college or a 4-year college? Is tenure a goal? -- and so on. These are just a few of the questions you should be able to answer before you send out your first application. Additionally, you want to give some consideration to your ability to commit (physically, psychologically, and financially) to the job search. It takes a great deal of time, energy, and money to conduct a job search effectively. It has often been stated that looking for a job is a full-time job in and of itself. However, going into it with the right attitude, the necessary materials, and realistic goals and expectations will make it a positive learning experience.

Special Note For Your Consideration

In considering the cost of the typical job search, take into account the following expenses:

- curriculum vitae (c.v.) typing and printing
- portfolio (supporting materials such as published articles, chapters and/or conference presentations, artwork, audio-visual tapes, scores, writing samples)
- postage (mailing c.v.'s, portfolios, follow-up letters)
- credential file/dossier
- official transcripts
- telephone expenses
- interviewing (travel, wardrobe, conference registration fees, lodging and food)
- miscellaneous (stationery, envelopes, copying, printing)*

*Finding a Job in Your Field: A Handbook for PhD's and MA's, pp. 2-3

KNOW YOUR FIELD

Once you have determined what you want, and where you want to be, but before you begin applying for positions, it's time to begin researching your discipline. Investigate recent and past hiring trends. Learn about starting salaries, application procedures and the interviewing process. Keep in mind that the academic job search is timed to the academic year. The selection process for many positions may begin as early as the Fall prior to your graduation. Make inquiries into the appropriate format for a curriculum vitae within your field of study. How can you acquire so much information? There are several ways:

1. **Faculty** - Try to establish a mentor relationship with a faculty member. Advisers and dissertation chairs are two that immediately come to mind. Not only can faculty provide support throughout the process; but, they can also provide valuable insights.

2. **Peers/Alumni** - Find out what your fellow classmates and students ahead of you in the program are doing. Try to talk with alumni who are currently employed, and have recently completed a job search. They may be able to provide advice to assist you in your efforts.

3. **Professional Publications** - *The Chronicle of Higher Education* is the primary source for listings of academic positions, both faculty and administrative. Professional journals and newsletters not only list full-time positions, but also include articles highlighting trends, updates, current research topics, etc.

4. **Professional Associations** - Many organizations publish periodicals specific to your discipline. They may include job listings and/or articles related to your career interests.

5. **Conferences/Conventions** - This is an opportunity to not only meet future colleagues; but, it also provides you with a forum enabling you to keep abreast of current issues as they relate to your discipline. Many conferences have job interviewing services available as well.

6. **CUA's Career Services Office** - Maintains professional job listings, and houses directories providing descriptions of colleges and universities all over the country, and some abroad.

7. **Professional Activity** - An excellent way to learn more about your discipline is to become actively involved in professional activities. Through this involvement, you not only enhance your knowledge, but you will also be viewed by others as an active, committed professional. Publish and/or present research at professional meetings. If finances permit, attend summer symposia and special training sponsored by organizations related to your discipline.

8. **Campus Committees** - If given the opportunity get involved in on-campus graduate student committees (departmental or university curriculum, administrative and/or advisory committees).

GATHERING CREDENTIALS

Once you have established your goals and priorities and know enough about the profession that you are about to enter, the next step is to gather all pertinent documents that support and document your credentials. This will make the job search much more organized, and ultimately more effective.

One of the most critical components of your search is your c.v. In most cases, this document will serve as your introduction to a potential employer. Therefore, it is imperative that it be an accurate, concise yet comprehensive, representation of your qualifications and interests.

Another supporting component of your search is the credential file, also known as a dossier. The dossier may include letters of recommendation, transcript(s), a writing sample, certificates of achievement, or any other relevant, supporting materials.

Regarding individuals who will write letters of recommendation, consider those who are most familiar with your academic background, work experiences and career interests. They may be faculty and/or employers. Select those who can write about you in the most specific terms. For example, it would be better to have a junior faculty member write specifics as opposed to a senior faculty member who doesn't know you well and would write more generally.

It may be to your advantage to spend some time discussing your specific career interests and goals with these individuals prior to their writing your letters. This will enable them to address your qualifications more specifically as they relate to the types of positions for which you will be applying. For additional information on establishing a credential file, stop by Career Services and pick up a registration packet, which includes the forms on which the letters must be written.

Other important materials for your job search include cover letters, follow-up letters, and perhaps a portfolio. This will, of course, depend on the requirements of your discipline. Refer to "A Guide to Writing Letters" in the Career Services Office.

PREPARING YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE

As mentioned previously, the c.v. is a critical element of the job search. Therefore, it should be a complete summary of your educational and professional experience as it relates to the types of positions for which you will be applying. Keep in mind, however, that every discipline has specific c.v. format requirements. Remember to find out the appropriate format within your field of study, chiefly by asking several faculty in your academic department.

Before you begin writing your c.v., think about what you want to communicate about yourself to potential employers. Consider your educational background, your interests and skills, and your aspirations. This will assist you in not only identifying organizations and positions of interest, but also in tailoring your c.v. to specific job leads. Once you have completed this task, you can then begin putting it all together!

The following is a suggested guideline that will enable you to begin thinking about and organizing your c.v. Again, it is crucial that the format be consistent with that of your particular discipline.

All information on your c.v. should be relevant to the type(s) of positions to which you will be applying. Depending on your background and experience, several pages may be necessary to accurately and completely depict your credentials. Generally speaking, c.v.'s are typically 2 pages, 3 pages at most. However, some disciplines may require a more detailed c.v., which may range from 4-12 pages. One thought to keep in mind...**Quality Before Quantity!**

Below is a sampling of the many categories from which you can choose. Their order will depend on their degree of importance as they relate to specific positions. In fact, you may have more than one version of your c.v., each highlighting a particular interest or type of institution. For example, you may have one c.v. targeted for community colleges, and one for a larger, 4-year+ university. Your community college c.v. may be more focused on teaching interests and skills, since that would be more appealing to that type of institution. On the other hand, you may have a c.v. for a larger, 4-year+ university, that

highlights research interests and other related activities. Rule of Thumb: Keep your audience in mind when organizing the content of your c.v.

CATEGORIES APPROPRIATE FOR THE VITA

Academic Preparation	Teaching Overview	Academic Service	Teaching Interests	Thesis
Academic Training	Experience Summary	Professional Service	Academic Interests	Research Interests
Academic Background	Experience Highlights	University Involvement	Research Interests	Comprehensive Areas
Education	Research Experience	Service	Educational Interests	Dissertation
Educational Background	Research Overview	Faculty Leadership	Professional Interests	Dissertation Title
Educational Overview	Administrative Experience	Committee Leadership		
Professional Studies	Consulting Experience	Departmental Leadership	Scholarships	Professional Competencies
Degrees	Continuing Education Exp.	Professional Association	Fellowships	Educational Highlights
Principal Teachers	Related Experience	Leadership & Activities	Academic Awards	Course Highlights
			Special Honors	Proficiencies
Academic Accomplishments	Foreign Study	Professional Experience	Distinctions	Areas of Knowledge
Professional Achievements	Study Abroad	Professional Overview	Honors and Awards	Areas of Expertise
Career Achievements	Travel Abroad	Professional Background	Prizes	
Career Highlights	Languages	Teaching Experience	College Activities	Publications
Background Language Competencies			Scholarly Publications	
		Professional Certification	Dossier Scholarly Works	
Scholarly Presentations	Internships	Certificates	Credentials	Books
Conference Presentations	Teaching/Research/Ass'tships	Licensure	Placement File	Professional Papers
Conventions Addresses	Graduate Fieldwork	Special Training	References	Articles/Monographs
Workshop Presentations	Graduate Practica	Endorsements	Recommendations	Reviews
Workshops and Conventions				Exhibits/Exhibitions
Programs and Workshops				Arrangements/Scores
Conferences Attended				
Conference Participation				
Conference Leadership				

(Finding a Job in Your Field, p.23)

There are generally 3 basic sections to a c.v.: **identification, education, and professional experience.**

Identification includes your name, address and phone number. Some individuals elect to include their e-mail address, and office address and phone number as well. If you include this, be sure to clearly identify them as such. Personal information, such as age, gender, race and religious affiliation should not be included on your c.v. Not only is it inappropriate, but, in most cases it is illegal for employers to ask you about this information. However, as part of the application process, you may receive a form from the Affirmative Action Officer to be completed, confidentially, and it will not be included in your application materials.

Education includes degrees completed as well as those in progress. Be sure to include the name and location of the institution, major field of study, anticipated graduation date, and dissertation title and an abstract -- in reverse chronological order. You may also include academic honors, awards and scholarships in this section.

Professional Experience is a rather broad category. You want to list any experience (paid or unpaid) that relates to the positions to which you will be applying. For example, if you're applying for a position that is primarily research focused, you would begin by listing research experience and/or interests. Perhaps you would then list any publications and/or presentations. This may be work you've completed as a professional in the field or as a graduate assistant or fellow. The key question to ask yourself is...Is it relevant? The degree of relevancy will determine where it is located within your c.v. The most important, most relevant information should be positioned towards the beginning of the document. On the other hand, if you're applying for a position that is primarily teaching focused, you would begin by listing teaching experience. Again, this may be work you've completed as a professional and/or work you've completed as a graduate assistant or teaching fellow.

Other information to include may be memberships/affiliations, volunteer experience, special/additional training, languages, and perhaps a statement regarding your dossier (e.g. References available through the Career Services Office at The Catholic University of America).

SAMPLE CONTENT FOR A CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME

Home Address
& Telephone Number

Office Address
& Telephone Number

EDUCATION:

- List degrees including years awarded (put most advanced degree first and continue in reverse chronological order), institutions, major field of study and dissertation topic with a brief synopsis.

HONORS:

- List academic honors, awards and scholarships.

TEACHING EXPERIENCES:

- List dates, institutions and courses taught; provide two or three sentences describing what you did.

TEACHING INTERESTS:

- List subjects you have taught and/or wish to teach.

RELATED EXPERIENCES:

- List related professional employment experiences; provide two or three sentences describing what you did.

RESEARCH INTERESTS:

- List subjects you are researching and/or wish to research.

PUBLICATIONS:

- List published work (books, journal articles, etc.) and dates; use standard citation style for your discipline.

MEMBERSHIPS:

- List professional associations to which you belong and indicate offices held (if applicable).

SERVICE:

- List related volunteer experience including academic committees.

REFERENCES:

- List faculty members/employers who can address your background and qualifications.

(Taken, with permission, from The University of Maryland Placement Manual, 1993)

DISCOVERING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Once you have determined the type of position and institution you're interested in, and how you would like to focus your job search, it is time to begin applying for positions. Keep in mind, though, that the more limitations and restrictions you set, the more you may limit your opportunities. However, it is also important to remain aware of your needs and the needs of those who are immediately affected by your decisions.

Advertised Openings

In order to begin applying for positions you must, of course, discover where opportunities that meet your interests and goals exist. Many of the ways you find out about positions have already been discussed: professional associations' publications, journals and periodicals (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Affirmative Action Register*, etc.), Career Services full-time job listings, conferences and conventions, departmental bulletin boards. These are the more visible job opportunities.

Unadvertised Openings

Another strategy to utilize is networking -- talking with faculty, department heads, alumni and fellow classmates within your field. Networking is a relatively time consuming process but certainly a beneficial one. The more visible you make yourself, the more potential employers will recognize you, your abilities and interests. This is a proactive strategy which requires planning much earlier on in your academic career. However, if started early on, it will enable you to uncover opportunities that may otherwise never be published.

Conferences

There are a few ways you can begin to network effectively. One is to attend professional association conferences. Depending on the size and scope of the association, you will have the chance to talk with professionals from all over the country and perhaps abroad. As the opportunity arises, don't be afraid to initiate conversations in which you could discuss your career and research interests, your career goals, along with their careers and current work. Gather as much information as you can about their institutions, positions, and departments. This is referred to as informational interviewing. For more information you may refer to the "Learning About Careers From Others: The Informational Interview" handout in Career Services.

Alumni

Another method for building your network is to identify recent CUA alumni within your discipline. Set up informational interviews with them. More often than not, alumni are willing and eager to share with you their experiences and expertise. Stop by the Career Services Office and ask about the Alumni Career Network.

Faculty

Finally, don't forget about your faculty. They may be able to give you some direction. Through their own professional networks of colleagues, they often become aware of opportunities before they are published.

Networking through informational interviewing is an excellent way to discover job opportunities. It also provides you with the opportunity to get a feel for how the interview process works. In fact, often times referrals to other professionals result from this contact. With persistence, patience, and adequate follow-through, these strategies will undoubtedly bring positive results.

Reviewing Job Listings

Once you have uncovered potential job opportunities, take note of the specific information provided. Pay particular attention to application procedures and deadlines, materials to submit, required vs. preferred qualifications, term of appointment, salary, and of course, the responsibilities and duties of the position. Read all of this information carefully. Decide if this is a job you would be interested in obtaining. Be sure to follow application procedures exactly. An oversight could result in your application being discarded.

Follow-Through

The importance of adequate follow-through cannot be overstated. It is appropriate and recommended that you call the institution to check on the receipt of your application materials if no acknowledgement has been received. It is also appropriate to ask about the time frame, if not already provided.

THE INTERVIEW

One of the most rewarding results of an effective job search is an invitation for an interview. It is also one of the most frightening for some people. However, as with everything already discussed, adequate preparation is the key to success. By knowing what to expect, and preparing for what will occur, you will increase the likelihood of performing to your capacity.

Understanding the Selection Process

The first step is to determine how the selection process will proceed. Typically, a selection committee, consisting of the department head, faculty, administrators, and students, narrows down the pool of candidates. They may conduct screening interviews, often over the phone, to further evaluate the candidate's degree of interest and qualifications as they relate to the position. The results of the screening interview provide the committee with information that would suggest that your credentials are worthy of further consideration. At this time, the committee identifies those they would like to invite to campus for a selection interview.

The On-Site Interview

If you make it through the initial phases of the screening process, there is more work to be done prior to your visit to campus. Find out what the on-campus interview will involve. Will you meet with the committee at one time or with each member individually? Who will make the arrangements for the day? Should you plan to stay overnight? If it's long distance, who will handle the travel and lodging accommodations? What will the itinerary for the day be? How will travel expenses be handled? These are just some of the questions you want to consider, especially if you're traveling out of town for the interview. By taking care of logistical arrangements, you can begin focusing on the content of the interview.

It is not uncommon for an on-campus interview to last an entire day, including 1-2 meals and perhaps an informal social gathering. **The informal nature of the social gathering, however, is still part of the interview process, and should be treated as such.** In a more formal vein, you may be asked to present your research to faculty members and/or students. You may also be asked to teach a class.

Professional Image

Dress appropriately for the institution with which you are interviewing. A conservative or business-look is best for most interviews -- a suit and tie for men and a suit or classic, tailored dress for women. Convey an image of professionalism and confidence.

Preparation

Research the institution and the faculty within the department. This information can be obtained from college catalogs, and Peterson's Annual Guides to Graduate and Undergraduate Study. Additionally, you may want to research junior faculty dissertation abstracts. Not only will this information make you feel more knowledgeable and confident; but, it will also provide you with conversational material throughout the interview process, as well as with background information when asking questions.

Prepare to discuss your credentials thoroughly. Be able to answer interview questions typical of your discipline. Talk with your faculty, alumni and fellow classmates for insight into the kinds of questions to expect. The more you know about the interview process within your discipline, the better you can prepare yourself. One final tip would be to practice, practice, practice...Have classmates or a faculty member conduct practice interviews with you. The more you practice, the more comfortable you will feel. And the more comfortable you feel, the more confident you will be throughout the interview process. A word of caution: don't be "over rehearsed." You want your responses to be natural and sincere. And be a good listener! Don't assume you know what the interviewer is going to ask.

Follow-Up

At the conclusion of the interview, be sure to thank the selection committee members for their time and consideration. Reaffirm your interest in the position. It is also appropriate to ask about the next step in the hiring process (e.g. when they anticipate making a final decision). If by the end of the day you are absolutely certain that you are no longer interested in the position, polite protocol would suggest that you wait until at least the next day to inform them of your decision to be removed from the candidate pool, either in writing or over the phone.

Another helpful hint is to follow up with a thank you note to the head of the selection committee, expressing your thanks to each of the individuals with whom you met, and again reaffirming your interest. As mentioned previously, if you no longer wish to be considered for the position this, too, would be an appropriate time to let them know of your decision.

Summary:

- Know yourself
- Know what to expect
- Know the university/college
- Know how to prepare

The information contained in this handout was compiled from the following resources found in the Career Services Office:

The Academic Job Search Handbook, 3rd Ed. Heiberger, Mary Morris, and Julia Miller Vick. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

The Chicago Guide to Your Academic Career: A Portable Mentor for Scholars from Graduate School through Tenure. Goldsmith, John, Komlos, John and Gold, Penny. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

The Curriculum Vitae Handbook: Using your CV to Present and Promote Your Academic Career. Anthony, R., and Gerald Roe. Iowa City, Iowa: Rudi Publishing, 1994.

How to Prepare your Curriculum Vitae. Jackson, Acy L. Illinois: NTC Publishing Group, 1993

Cracking the Academic Nut. Newhouse, Margaret. Cambridge, Mass. Office of Career Services, Harvard University, 1997.

Additional resources found in the Career Services Office to assist you in your job search efforts include:

Publications:

- "The Chronicle of Higher Education" (published weekly)
- National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States
- Peterson's Guide to 4-year Colleges
- Peterson's Guides to Graduate & Professional Programs
- Peterson's Guide to Two Year Colleges

Services:

- Credential File Service (A file established for your letters of recommendation, undergraduate and/or graduate transcripts and other appropriate, supporting documents; fee-based service)
- Alumni Career Network (Listing of alums who have offered to share with you their career and job search experiences)
- Full-time Job Listings (Existing opportunities received by our office on a daily basis)
- Individual Job Search Appointments (Talk about your specific job search needs with a staff member)
- Sample C.V.'s & Resumes
- Handouts on Informational Interviewing, Resume/Letter Writing, Interviewing

For more information, stop by or call:
Career Services
202 Pryzbyla Center • (202) 319-5623
Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm