Navigating the US Academic Job Market

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Do you really want to be an academic?

• There are tremendous benefits to the academy
  – Prestige
  – Autonomy
  – Both social (teaching) and solitary (research) work
  – Flexibility to pursue one’s intellectual interests
    • But don’t romanticize this

• However
  – Your PhD may teach you that the academy is not the right place – lots of smart people do other things
Do you really want to be an academic?

• Up to half of each graduating cohort decides not to enter the academy
  – Consulting
  – Independent research
  – Government
  – Non-profits
  – Corporate work in finance, government relations, government contracting, etc.

• However... *if you choose to go outside the academy after graduation, the door to the academy may be shut forever*
  – And then there’s the pay...
Do you really want to be an academic?

- Here is the reality in public affairs (nine-month contract)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public (low – avg – high)</th>
<th>Private (low – avg – high)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Public Admin</td>
<td>09-10 41,358 – 59,775 – 92,500</td>
<td>34,364 – 53,616 – 85,000</td>
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<td>11-12 40,000 – 55,000 – 94,000</td>
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<td>12-13 38,500 – 57,961 – 83,000</td>
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<td>13-14 50,657 – 85,161 – 125,000</td>
<td>54,500 – 84,874 – 125,500</td>
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</table>
Assuming you DO want to be a faculty member...where do I fit?

• Professional schools are the primary option
  – Policy and public administration departments
  – Other professional schools – criminal justice, social work, public health
  – Business schools

• Some public affairs grads enter disciplines...
  – Political science, economics, sociology
  – But...to fit into these fields you must amass sufficient background in the core literature of these fields
I’m years away from graduating. What can I do to improve my chances?

- *Publish, publish, publish*
- Get to know faculty members who are connected to the niche you wish to enter
- Make conference presentations starting no later than your third year
What can I do at the beginning?

• Develop a transcript that has a discernible focus
  – A clear disciplinary or substantive focus broadens your market
  – Learn methods appropriate to your field

• Try to do one or more of these...
  – Get varied teaching experience
  – Get research experience
  – Seek grant funding – just applying will help

• Get FINISHED!!!!
  – The only good dissertation is a finished dissertation
  – Length of time in program ~ productivity
SEEKING AN ACADEMIC JOB
OK, What exactly is a faculty job?

- Faculty are hired on a 9 or 10-month contract
  - The initial rank is Assistant Professor, with promotion possible to Associate and Full
  - Associate & Full Professors usually have “tenure”
- Summers are not formally committed, but...
  - You may be able to get grants/teaching to earn summer salary (up to 1/3 of your base)
  - Your summers are not “free” until you get tenure (if ever) because of research requirements at most institutions
OK, What exactly is a faculty job?

• Faculty are evaluated on three areas
  – Research
    • At research-intensive universities: usually 1-3 referred articles/year (book = 3-5 articles)
  – Teaching
    • 3-8 classes/year (teaching “load”), sometimes expressed as semester split (a “2-2” load)
  – Service
    • Serve on committees, mentor & advise students, help administer the institution, be visible
OK, What exactly is a faculty job?

• “Publish or perish”
  – Research universities: publication record is your key credential, but you must teach competently
  – Teaching colleges: Research is less important...but still counts

• Increasingly, faculty are expected to find grants

• You do not have to be stellar in each, but you should be good in all
I’m ready to go on the market. Now what?

- Number of posting on roughly September 15 each year

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PublicServiceCareers.org</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
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<td>178</td>
<td>49 (28%)</td>
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<td>66 (37%)</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>23 (17%)</td>
<td>45 (33%)</td>
<td>68 (50%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>33 (20%)</td>
<td>72 (43%)</td>
<td>64 (38%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>42 (22%)</td>
<td>49 (25%)</td>
<td>102 (53%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>35 (45%)</td>
<td>19 (24%)</td>
<td>24 (31%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>24 (25%)</td>
<td>25 (26%)</td>
<td>47 (49%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>28 (42%)</td>
<td>15 (23%)</td>
<td>23 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>27 (26%)</td>
<td>61 (59%)</td>
<td>16 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>58 (39%)</td>
<td>63 (43%)</td>
<td>27 (18%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>30 (33%)</td>
<td>45 (49%)</td>
<td>16 (18%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>49 (35%)</td>
<td>70 (50%)</td>
<td>21 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding openings

• Searching the job listing sites:
  – PublicServiceCareers.org
  – Chronicle of Higher Education
  – HigherEdJobs.com
  – APSA
  – AoM

• E-mail to departments of interest
• Telephone calls
• Key: Getting your advisors into the act
Putting together a portfolio

• Goal: Help the overloaded search committee find you!
• Cover letters
  – Create boiler plate, but **tailor to each job**
• Curriculum vitae
  – Make your publications prominent
  – Highlight research and teaching experience
• Supporting materials
  – Summaries of research interest, dissertation, and teaching
  – Teaching evaluations
  – Grant writing experience
  – Transcripts
• Letters of recommendation – **ask early**
• Job market paper(s)
Job market papers

• Should have multiple items to send
  – Papers – preferably published
  – Dissertation chapters

• A few schools only want dissertation chapters; most don’t specify
  – Dissertation is best example of current work, but..
  – Chapters may hard to decipher without those chapters that come before & after
  – Published or accepted articles should be sent, even if chapters are required
Submitting applications

• This is time-consuming
  – National search: 15 to 60 applications
  – First applications out by early/mid August; the last in January, February, or even March
  – Almost all online submissions now

• SUBMIT ON TIME...
  – ...BUT send out even if the deadline has passed – committees work slowly
Making the cut

• Increasingly, schools are conducting semi-finalist interviews
  – 6-12 candidates
  – By phone or Skype
  – Usually 30-45 minutes
  – May not get much notice

• Need to be prepared almost as much as for a “flyout”
Fly-outs

- Invitations go out as early as mid-to-late September
- Paid for by the schools – *often by reimbursement*
- Consist of...
  - A job talk
  - Multiple faculty, student, and administration interviews
  - Breakfast, lunch, and dinner with students, staff, faculty
  - Possibly a “party” if they *really* want to torture you
- Time-consuming and stressful...but a great opportunity to meet people in the field
- You want to be scheduled close to the end of the decision period for the school
Preparation

• Get to know the school/department and university via their web site
  – Rankings
  – Research agenda
  – Age/rank distribution in school/department

• Review the courses offered...
  – For what you could teach
  – For holes

• Take a look at strategic plans & vision statements
Interviews

• The job talk gets most of the attention, but bad interviews can also be fatal
• Be ready to give 1, 3 and 5 minute versions of your job talk
• Be ready to defend your work
• Be prepared to answer and ask questions
Job talk

• Bad news: *Some significant fraction of the voting faculty will not have read your job market paper(s) thoroughly*

• More bad news: Your job talk will be one of the key evaluation of whether you belong at a given university

• Upshot: **THE JOB TALK IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU WILL DO DURING THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

• Practice, practice, practice, and practice again...
  – With faculty
  – With students
  – With your dog, cat, or parakeet

• Be ready to field tough questions
Other issues

• Remember that faculty positions are for the long haul; much of the job is social
• Think about how to handle inappropriate questions
• Avoid talking money until you have an offer
• Decisions are highly complex, emergent
  – Preferences evolve
  – School/department needs evolve
  – Administrative preferences shift
  – Budgets change
• There may only be a few good fits out there
Dealing with an offer

• Understand how faculty contracts work
• Standard package
  – Nine or 10 months salary (might be negotiable)
  – Teaching load (not negotiable, preps might be)
  – Benefits (not negotiable)
  – Research support (if any; negotiable)
  – Summer salary (if any; negotiable)
• Expect to be pressured for a quick decision, even though you may still be doing job talks
Uh-oh: I don’t have an offer. Now what?

- Goal: Stay research active
- Options
  - Defer graduation (especially international students)
  - Adjunct/visiting positions
  - Post-doctoral work
  - Staff research positions
  - Consulting
  - The "quasi-academy"
For more information

See the Rockefeller College job market site:

http://www.albany.edu/rockefeller/jobmarket.shtml

http://chronicle.com/jobs/
http://www.publicservicecareers.org/
http://www.higheredjobs.com/
http://www.apsanet.org/section_226.cfm
http://jobs.aom.org
Do you really want to be an academic?

Here is another reality: Business schools pay more…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Public (low – avg – high)</th>
<th>Private (low – avg – high)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>All fields</td>
<td>43,000 – 104,386 – 200,000</td>
<td>31,583 – 87,848 – 197,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>45,000 – 98,038 – 177,000</td>
<td>45,000 – 78,786 – 160,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>45,000 – 97,004 – 174,000</td>
<td>31,350 – 70,000 – 130,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mgmt, Business Admin, Ops</td>
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<td>33,583 – 77,697 – 147,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>48,750 – 99,307 – 160,000</td>
<td>34,000 – 87,718 – 150,000</td>
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<td>50,000 – 101,946 – 185,000</td>
<td>44,371 – 92,720 – 165,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>69,492 – 128,274 – 200,000</td>
<td>48,750 – 123,649 – 202,000</td>
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<td>82,000 – 131,266 – 215,000</td>
<td>63,000 – 131,719 – 205,000</td>
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<td>Human resources</td>
<td>51,856 – 77,220 – 125,000</td>
<td>52,250 – 74,747 – 126,000</td>
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<td>52,000 – 94,721 – 145,000</td>
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<td>56,000 – 88,370 – 135,000</td>
<td>60,000 – 100,500 – 140,000</td>
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<td>66,600 – 102,291 – 150,000</td>
<td>90,000 – 111,929 – 152,000</td>
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<td>68,000 – 111,096 – 157,333</td>
<td>36,952 – 102,065 – 159,250</td>
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