Preparing for your academic job interview

• The job talk

• Questions to expect

• Questions to ask

• Negotiating
  – Teaching load
  – Startup funding
  – Starting dates
Goals of a job talk

• This is a marketing talk, not a scientific presentation!
• Introduce your field to a lay scientific audience
• Illustrate your long-term research trajectory
• Summarize your research accomplishments
• Summarize your research goals
  – Five year plan, leading to a career trajectory
Outline your job talk

– Organize your talk in terms of an overarching theme that ties together your research areas
– Give adequate background to allow your audience to see the novelty/contribution of your work
– Allot only a couple slides per experiment
– Don’t include: number of subjects, specific details about methodology and research design, unless they are novel
– Explain your 5 year research plan
– Explain your career research goals
Preparing your job talk

• **Use the words** “novel”, “innovative” and synonyms as much as possible.

• **Keep the message clear:**
  – Don’t muddy the issues with secondary findings and hypotheses
  – Present disparate research topics as cohesively as possible

• **Emphasize novel findings and techniques**
Goals of an interview

– Allow the department to assess how you will fit into the department
  • Teaching
  • Research
  • Personality

– Allow you to gather information about the department and determine how you will fit in
  • Teaching
  • Research
  • Personalities

– For the most part, it is NOT to assess your scientific ability
Questions to expect

– What will write you first grant about?
– Who would you collaborate with?
– Who could serve as a mentor?
– What existing resources would you use?
– What resources do you need?
– What courses can you teach?
– What courses will you develop?
– How many graduate students will you need?
Questions to ask

- Repeat questions liberally with each faculty member: you will get differing answers that may reveal sources of conflict or miscommunication within the department
- Where do most faculty members seek funding?
- What is the typical teaching load?
- Are there teaching buy-out policies?
- Why did you come here?
- What are tenure expectations?
- Who was the last person to get tenured? to be denied tenure?
- What are students like?
- See the handout for more questions
Remembering everything

• Make sure to take notes after your interview
• Write down one thing about each person you met
• Write down answers to important questions
• Write down questions that still need answering
Negotiating your offer

– If you are being considered for a job, you have negotiating power.

• Teaching load
  – First year respite

• Starting date
  – If they want you they may delay your starting date up to 1 - 1.5 years

• Salary

  – Often, one job offer can be used to effectively leverage another
Startup funding

– Try to find out average startup packages of recent new faculty
– Prepare an itemized list of equipment you need
– Each additional item should clearly enhance your research ability
– The goal is to reach a point where they say “no”.
– This sets up realistic expectations for your research accomplishments / time devoted to grant writing
– If you don’t ask, you won’t get it
Staying in touch

• Be sure to write thank you letters to:
  – Committee chair
  – Department chair
  – Deans
  – Faculty in your immediate research area
  – Any faculty who might be especially supportive of you

• In your letter emphasize your fit with the department
Good Luck!!