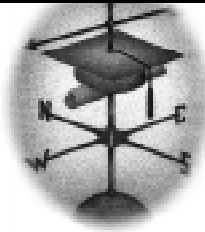


# The Academic Job Search



A single account of the academic job search cannot deal with all of the issues and concerns that will confront you as a job candidate. For one thing, the nature of the search can change markedly from discipline to discipline, and even from subfield to subfield within a given discipline. For another thing, there is no such thing as a “standard” candidate. You must think about the job search in the context of your own academic goals and experiences, although there are some similarities among effective searches, whether they are in the humanities, the natural sciences, the social sciences, or engineering. This guide should be regarded as merely an introduction to a complicated and frequently confusing process. The faculty in your department will always be the best source of advice about your search, and you should discuss every step of the process with your adviser. This guide to the academic job search is intended as a starting point rather than a source of definitive advice.

## Contents:

- Preliminaries
- The application
- Interviewing
- Offers and negotiations
- The end of the process

ings of many scholarly associations, although sometimes the online listings are available only to subscribers.

## A Note on Job Announcements

An academic job announcement is not necessarily a clear-cut statement of a department’s inflexible needs. The wording of any given announcement may depend on a number of factors, not all of them

strictly academic (e.g., departmental politics). So don’t shy away from applying for an attractive job that you feel qualified to perform, even if the job description doesn’t precisely match your history. Although it’s certainly possible that the department in question knows exactly what it wants, this is by no means certain. The only job you have no chance of getting is the job you never apply for.

## Learning about the Market

Before you begin your search, you should know something about the job market. Find out about the hiring outlook in your discipline and in your field of research, the level of competition at prestigious institutions, and the opportunities for employment in various kinds of positions (for example, postdoctoral appointments, teaching at professional schools, etc.). Sources for this information include the ERIC database, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and scholarly associations.

## Where to Apply

Be sure to take both personal and professional considerations into account when you decide where to apply. You don’t want to end up at a prestigious institution whose location will make you miserable, but you also don’t want to end up at an institution where you can’t pursue the research that interests you, even if the location is ideal. For a list of questions that can help you orient your job search, see the sidebar.

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## PRELIMINARIES

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### Getting Started

It’s important to start thinking about the academic job search well before you finish writing your dissertation. Early on, you should learn about the important sources of job listings in your field, begin thinking about the kinds of jobs you will want to apply for, and start building a professional history. If you are in the humanities or you want to work at an institution that emphasizes teaching, you will probably want to get a lot of experience as a teacher. If you are in the sciences or you want to work at an institution that emphasizes research, you might want to focus on building an impressive research history. You should also participate in the conferences of your discipline’s scholarly organization. The earlier you start preparing to enter the academic job market, the better.

### Finding Job Announcements

Most scholarly associations publish job listings, sometimes as part of a journal, but more often as a separate bulletin. These listings are the primary source of academic job announcements. You can also find extensive listings, covering a variety of fields, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The *Chronicle’s* listings are available online, as are the list-

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## THE APPLICATION

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When you apply to any college or university for a teaching position, you will be asked to send a CV. You may also need to send letters of recommendation, a dissertation abstract, a summary of your future research plans, a statement of your teaching philosophy, a chapter of your dissertation,

or an entire research paper. Some announcements will ask you to “send credentials” or “send dossier.” These terms do not have a standard meaning, but you can usually assume that what is meant is a cover letter, a CV, letters of recommendation, and perhaps a transcript. If you are unsure about what to send in response to a particular announcement, ask someone in your department about what is customary in your field, or call the hiring institution and ask.

### The CV

Your CV is the first thing you will send to a hiring institution. It is designed to provide an overview of your academic history, but its real purpose is to generate enough interest in you to get you a personal interview. Make sure that your CV is clear, concise, and consistent and that all the information it contains is current. You may need several versions of your CV

if you are applying to different types of institutions (e.g., both teaching and research institutions), but the differences between the versions do not need to be too extensive. For tips on writing your CV, see the Career Service Center’s brochure on CVs and resumes.

### The Cover Letter

Your cover letter highlights those aspects of your experience that are especially relevant to the position you’re applying for. Rather than just repeating information from your CV, the cover letter should demonstrate how your accomplishments relate to the requirements of the position at hand. You will almost certainly want to talk about your dissertation, your research plans, and your teaching interests, but the nature of the institution to which you’re applying will determine how much relative emphasis each of these topics receives.

## Questions to Consider in Deciding Where to Apply

### ***Institutional Characteristics***

Are you willing or eager to consider jobs at:

- A public or private institution?
- A large university or a small four-year teaching college or community college?
- A school with a distinctive institutional personality, such as a women’s college, an institution with a strong religious affiliation, or a school offering an innovative curriculum?
- An institution that emphasizes research over teaching or one that emphasizes teaching over research? A competitive job market has enabled institutions that formerly emphasized only one of these things to require both; however, “teaching” and “research” institutions still may be distinguished from each other.
- A place that demands or offers heavy involvement in the life of the school (usually a teaching college) or one in which your major identification will be with your department?
- A highly selective institution or one that prides itself on offering educational opportunities to a broad section of the community?
- An institution where the faculty is unionized or one where individual salaries are market-driven?
- An institution that compensates new faculty members with salary or one that compensates them with prestige?
- A U.S. institution or one in another country?

### ***Departmental Characteristics***

Do you prefer:

- Many colleagues in your field of research or an opportunity to be the in-house expert in your field?
- Opportunity to and expectation that you will socialize with others in the department or an atmosphere that

encourages solely professional involvement?

- An emphasis on graduate or on undergraduate teaching?
- A department in which you would be the first person of your social background ever hired or one in which you feel most people are like you?
- A department with a specific orientation (“traditional,” “radical,” “applied”) or one whose faculty members take a variety of approaches?
- A department where teaching occurs mainly in seminars or one where classes are primarily large lectures?
- A department that emphasizes research or one that emphasizes teaching? Think about what kind of facilities you need to carry out your own research plans.
- A department with a hierarchical structure or one that emphasizes participatory decision making?

### ***Geographic Considerations***

- Is it important to you to be in a rural, small city, suburban, or urban environment?
- Does your research require resources that are available in limited geographic locations?
- Can you work and live comfortably in any region of the country?
- Will you need to limit the geographic range of your search because of personal considerations, such as the career plans of a partner, a child’s education, or the need to be near a relative who is ill?
- Will you look only in the United States or will you expand your search to other countries? Are you able to teach in a language other than English?

(from *The Academic Job Search Handbook*. Heiberger, Mary Morris and Julia Miller Vick, 1996: Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

**The Introduction.** In the first paragraph of your letter, be sure to identify the position you're applying for by rank and field, since some departments may be conducting multiple job searches at the same time. You might also indicate how you learned about the position.

**Dissertation.** In addition to describing the basic argument of your dissertation, you should explain how your work contributes to your field. Many of the people who see your application will not be experts in your specific area, so explain the significance of your work in relation to broader trends and issues within your discipline.

**Research and Teaching.** Explain how your experiences and interests fit with the demands of the position. If you have received consistently positive feedback about your teaching, you might mention some of the comments that students have made.

**Conclusion.** In your last paragraph, offer to provide extra materials or additional information. Give a phone number or e-mail address where you can be reached and indicate your availability for interviews at conferences or on the hiring institution's campus. Finally, thank the reader for his or her consideration.

Letters in the humanities may be up to two pages long, while those in the natural sciences and social sciences are usually only one page long. Have your adviser and other faculty members who are involved with departmental hiring read your first few letters to make sure that they are appropriate for your field.

#### Letters of Recommendation

At some point in the screening process for nearly every job, you will be asked to provide several letters of recommendation, usually between three and five, often as part of your initial application. One of these letters should be written by your dissertation adviser, but the others can come from any scholars in your field with whom you have worked closely and who know your work well enough to recommend you convincingly. At least one letter should address your teaching experience. If you have a strong professional relationship with a respected scholar from another institution, it might be wise to ask this person for a recommendation. His or her assessment of your work may seem more objective and disinterested than the comments of professors who have personally known you for years. However, you should only ask such a person for a letter of

Candidate's Address  
Date

Professor Jones  
Department of Sociology  
University Address

Dear Professor Jones:

I am writing in response to your notice in the November *ASA Employment Bulletin* of the position as Assistant Professor of Sociology in your department. I am current a doctoral candidate at Rice University and expect to complete all requirements for the degree by May 2002.

My dissertation area deals with the evaluation of 14 child abuse prevention programs in the metropolitan Houston area. Through my association with the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, I interviewed 80 mothers participating in various parent education programs. From the qualitative data I gathered, as well as from quantitative data collected by the National Committee, I am evaluating the efficacy of the programs. In addition, the qualitative data have led me to challenge cultural assumptions about appropriate child-rearing practices and to consider issues surrounding the mainstream definitions of child maltreatment. Since the populations I have studied are largely poor minorities, I am examining the role of social isolation in the family experience of these parents.

As you can see from my vita, I have been most fortunate in my graduate student career to have had ample opportunity both to teach and to do research. As a teaching assistant and as an instructor of my own courses, I have been afforded a great deal of experience with a wide range of courses, including Qualitative Methods, Social Stratification, and Deviance; a list of my teaching interests can be found on my vita. The anonymous reviews by my students have been consistently laudatory, citing my knowledge, teaching style, and enthusiasm as highlights of my courses. I am committed to working with my students and have maintained professional relationships with many of them years beyond the classroom.

My research interests are as varied as my teaching. I have engaged in corporate and organizational research for the past three years with Dr. Brown at Rice University. One article stemming from his work, "Leveraged Buyouts and Corporate Political Action," has recently been published in *Social Sciences Quarterly*. In addition, I have worked extensively with Professor Larson, formerly of Bryn Mawr College and currently of the University of California, Davis. This work has included my master's project on unplanned teen pregnancy as well as field study of the Houston pro-life and pro-choice movements, linking the movements to Gusfield's notion of the symbolic crusade. Recently, I independently conducted research on female crack addicts in rehabilitative programs, a project that I eventually hope to address in a series of short papers.

I have been an active member of the academic and social communities at Rice University and at Bryn Mawr College. I have served on numerous committees and have been a vigorous and enthusiastic participant in university life. My involvement spans groups as serious as the University Academic Planning and Budget Committee, a provost's committee to which only two graduate students are appointed each year, and as whimsical as the annual Sociology Department t-shirt contest, which I originated and continue to run each year.

I believe that I would be an asset to your department and university and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the assistant professorship with you further. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
T. L. Smith

recommendation if you are positive that he or she is very familiar with your work.

**Prepping Your Letter Writers.** In a nonacademic job search, letters of recommendation are often used to reinforce or confirm a recruiter's enthusiasm about an applicant. In an academic setting, however, letters of recommendation help form the hiring committee's initial feeling about each candidate, so these letters must be taken even more seriously than in a nonacademic search. It is often a good idea to prepare your letter writers by reminding them (in an appropriate, conversational fashion) of your work and experience. If one of your letter writers made a particularly positive comment about your work in the past, you may remind him or her of this, because you probably remember the comment more clearly than he or she does. Provide your letter writers with anything that will be helpful, such as a CV, a copy of a paper you wrote, a dissertation chapter, or a statement of your research goals.

## Other Materials

You may be asked to provide other materials in addition to your CV and letters of recommendation. These might include a dissertation abstract, a statement of your research plans, a statement of your teaching philosophy, a videotape of your teaching, a syllabus for a course you have taught, or a transcript. Some institutions may request more materials from you in later stages of the job search. Of course, any document that you send to a hiring institution should be written clearly and concisely, and should emphasize the ways in which you will contribute to the hiring institution as a scholar and as a teacher. Use active verbs to grab the reader's attention. Before you send anything to a prospective employer, have someone in your department look at it to make sure that it is appropriate for your discipline and field.

**Statement of teaching philosophy.** This should not be an abstract exposition of your ideas about teaching. Instead, it should be an essay describing what you actually do in the classroom. General statements should be accompanied by specific examples drawn from your experience, and if students have responded well to your approach, say so. For more specific ideas about how to write your statement, try to look at statements written by others in your department or submitted by applicants to your department, if you have access to these.

## What Not to Send

Don't send anything that is not requested. Hiring committees have to examine dozens of applications, and they don't have time to look at a lot of extraneous documents. If an ad is ambiguous about what you should send, check with the faculty in your department, or call the hiring department and ask for a more explicit statement of what is expected. Do NOT send anything just because you think it might be impressive; in all likelihood, it will just be distracting.

# INTERVIEWING

## Conference Interviews

The interviews held at scholarly association conferences vary widely from discipline to discipline, both in their format and in their importance for the applicant. These interviews are usually short (between a half-hour and an hour long), and you will be only one of many applicants interviewed on the same day, so you must present yourself and your work concisely and memorably. By the same token, you will probably have several interviews on the same day, so schedule them wisely. Bring extra copies of your CV, your dissertation abstract, your statement of research plans, and any other materials that you may wish to show the interviewers. After the conference, it is courteous to send a thank-you note to the chair of the search committee.

**The setting.** A typical conference interview takes place in a hotel room, with about six faculty members present. When you schedule the interview, you can ask how many people will

probably interview you. This will give you some idea of what to expect. Ideally, at least one of the interviewers will come from your subfield, but this will not necessarily be the case.

**Questions to expect.** You will almost certainly be asked to discuss your dissertation, your teaching interests, and your research plans. The interviewers will probably follow up your initial responses with further questions, so you should be prepared to answer a variety of questions about your academic history and expectations. It is also likely that the interviewers will ask why you want to work at their institution, especially if it is very different from Rice.

At the end of the interview, the interviewers will probably give you a chance to ask questions of your own. If there is anything you want to know about the department, ask, but don't ask trivial questions just to fill up time. Above all, don't exceed the interview's allotted time; conference interviews are often very tightly scheduled.

**Preparation.** If at all possible, you should practice your interviewing skills with members of your department, including some who are not very familiar with your work. Since conference interviews are short, your answers will have to be very concise without being superficial. For example, two minutes is generally a good length for your initial description of your dissertation. After this brief summary of your topic, method, and findings, you will probably have about 10 minutes to describe your work in more detail, possibly in response to specific questions. In preparing for the interview, you should also think about what sort of research you will want to pursue after you finish your dissertation; this should not be merely an extension of your dissertation, but it should not be so different from your dissertation that it sounds unreasonable. Of course, the best way to prepare for an interview is to practice as much as possible.

**Problems.** It's possible that you will be asked questions that seem strange, irrelevant, or inappropriate. For example, it is illegal for interviewers to ask you questions that may lead to discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, national origin, or physical disability. Of course, it is not a good idea to become indignant if such a question is asked. Often, the interviewer is trying to approach another issue indirectly. For example, he or she may ask you about your spouse's job in order to determine how long you are likely to stay in a position. If you think it will be to your advantage to provide this sort of information, do so. If not, politely steer the interview in another direction. You can find more information on this topic in the Career Service Center's brochure on interviewing.

## Phone Interviews

Scheduled phone interviews are becoming increasingly common. Because they are often arranged as conference calls, you may be faced with the challenge of learning to recognize several different people based on their voices alone. The questions are usually similar to those asked at a conference interview. Phone interviews require you to establish a rapport with your interviewer(s) without being able to rely on visual cues, which can be difficult. There is no univer-

## Possible interview questions

### **About research:**

Why did you choose your dissertation topic?  
Can you tell us briefly what theoretical framework you used in developing your research?  
Of course, you've read \_\_\_\_? (names an unfamiliar article/book related to your dissertation)  
If you were to begin it again, are there any changes you would make in your dissertation?  
In doing your research, why didn't you \_\_\_\_? (This question can take many forms. You are being asked to respond appropriately to an intellectual challenge to your work.)  
What contribution does your dissertation make to the field?  
Is it important?  
You realize that several members of this department tend to approach the subject from a very different perspective than does your adviser. . . .  
Tell me about your dissertation (asked in a meeting with a dean who knows very little about your field).  
Why didn't you finish your dissertation sooner?  
I see you have very few publications. . . .  
What are your research plans for the next two/five/ten years?  
What are your plans for applying for external funding over the next few years?  
What facilities do you need to carry out your research plans?  
Do you plan to apply for any major funding?

### **About teaching**

Are you a good teacher?  
How do you feel about having to teach required courses?  
What is your approach to teaching introductory \_\_\_\_?  
How do you motivate students?  
How would you encourage students to major in our field?  
In your first semester you would be responsible for our course in \_\_\_\_\_. How would you structure it? What textbook would you use?  
Many of our students are probably (more/less academically talented; older/younger) than those you've become used to at Rice. How successful would you be with them?  
What is your teaching philosophy?

If you could teach any course you wanted to, what would it be?  
Have you had any experience with the case-study method?  
What do you think is the optimal balance between teaching and research?  
Have you had any experience with interactive online instruction?

### **About your willingness to participate in the department and school**

Can you summarize the contribution you would make to our department?  
Are you willing to become involved in committee work?  
Why are you interested in our kind of school?  
What institutional issues particularly interest you?

### **About your career and personal choices**

If you have more than one job offer, how will you decide?  
How do you feel about living in a small college town like this in an isolated rural area?  
I can't imagine why a young person like you would want to go into this field. . . .  
I understand your spouse is completing his/her Ph.D. What if you receive job offers in different locations? (This question is not legal in most contexts, but you should be prepared for it.)  
What do you do in your spare time?  
Who else is interviewing you?  
What will it take to persuade you to take this job?  
What kind of salary are you looking for?

### **Do you have any questions for us?**

Prepare some questions in advance, but, above all, ask questions that show a response to what you have learned from the interviewers and that are lively, rather than formulaic.

(from *The Academic Job Search Handbook*. Heiberger, Mary Morris and Julia Miller Vick, 1996: Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

sally effective way of overcoming this difficulty; you will have to learn what works for you.

## The Campus Visit

Being brought in for a campus visit is a sign that you are on the hiring department's short list of promising candidates. The question is no longer whether you are a good scholar, but whether you will be a good addition to this particular department. As you talk with the faculty, try to get a sense of what the department is like; this is probably your best opportunity to decide whether or not you would enjoy working in this environment. The campus visit also gives

you a good chance to gauge your reaction to the institution's physical setting. Although this may not seem like a pressing concern, remember that you may be working here for decades. If you honestly can't stand the local weather or the campus's appearance, you will definitely want to take this into consideration when you're deciding whether or not to accept a job offer.

**Interviews and activities.** Your campus visit may involve either a group interview, several individual interviews, or (most likely) both. The individual interviews will probably be more informal and conversational than your off-campus interviews; feel free to ask the interviewer about his or her own

work in addition to discussing your background and plans. In general, your interactions with the faculty will be more casual during this visit than they have been heretofore. You will probably eat an informal meal or two with the faculty, and there may be a reception. This is your chance to impress the faculty not only as a scholar, but also as a potential colleague and friend.

In addition to your meetings and interviews with the faculty, you may meet with the dean of students, human resources personnel, and representatives of the student body. The latter may be especially helpful in giving you another perspective on the institution and its expectations of you as a potential faculty member.

The most crucial part of a campus visit is the job talk or presentation, which is discussed below, in its own section.

**Preparation.** Keep practicing your interviewing skills with members of your department. Learn about the institution and the department from catalogs, general announcements, and professors. You should also be somewhat familiar with the research interests and publication histories of the hiring department's faculty (you can find this information through database searches and on departmental websites). Bring along extra copies of your CV, your dissertation abstract, your statement of research interests, and anything else you might want to distribute to the hiring faculty.

### The Job Talk

The job talk is the single most important part of a campus visit. For the faculty, it is an opportunity to assess a candidate's research, presence as a speaker, teaching style, and ability to think under pressure. On the basis of your presentation, you will be evaluated as a scholar, as a teacher, and as a potential colleague. Different institutions and disciplines have different expectations about the length and format of your presentation, so make sure that you know what is expected of you and that you abide by any guidelines (for example, if there is a time limit on your presentation, don't exceed it). Here are some issues to consider when preparing your presentation:

**Your audience.** Will there be people from other departments? Will there be undergraduates? You should consider the probable makeup of your audience when you're deciding how specific and technical your presentation should be. If part of your audience will not be familiar with your area of expertise, you should spend more time explaining the overall background and significance of your work. This is especially important at liberal arts colleges and teaching-oriented institutions.

**Subject matter.** First and foremost, stick with what you know. You should be very familiar with the subject matter of your talk. Don't present a new or unfinished project about which you are slightly uncertain. Your talk will probably be closely related to your dissertation; however, you shouldn't try to summarize your entire dissertation. Instead, focus on one significant aspect of it. Your presentation should give your audience an idea of how you think and work, and a more specific talk does this more effectively than a diffuse overview.

**Preparation.** One way to learn how to give a good job talk is to watch other people's presentations. Afterwards, listen to how faculty members evaluate the talk. Try to figure out what works and what doesn't. This is also a good way to learn about the conventions of job talks in your field, although these conventions also change from institution to institution depending on size, prestige, etc. When you think your presentation is ready, practice delivering it to the mirror, to your fellow students, and, if possible, to your adviser. Get as much feedback as you can.

**The Q&A session.** The question and answer session following your talk is almost as important as the talk itself. The hiring department wants to see that you can think on your feet and respond to unexpected questions. When you practice giving your talk, get your colleagues to ask the most difficult questions they can think of. It is, of course, extremely important that you take every question seriously, no matter how strange or uninformed it seems. Answer all questions in the most direct and sophisticated way possible.

## OFFERS AND NEGOTIATIONS

### Offers

Once you receive an offer, the balance of power of the job search shifts. You are now in a position to negotiate terms and ask your most probing questions about the institution. However, keep in mind that you might spend years of your life working with the people with whom you're negotiating, so make sure that your relationship with them is always cordial and respectful. Usually, you will have one or two weeks after the offer is made in which to make your decision. During that time, you should find out everything that you want to know about the department and the institution. Some issues you might investigate, if you haven't done so already, include:

**Departmental issues.** Do people in the department seem happy? Do they meet to discuss their ongoing research, or do they work on their research behind closed doors? Do you feel comfortable with the departmental culture and with the department's general atmosphere? If the department's strengths are different from your present interests, will you be able to adapt to these strengths in a way that will be productive for you as a scholar and as a teacher?

**Institutional issues.** Talk to students, faculty, and administrators. What does each group expect of you? What are the institutional norms? For example, are relations between students and professors relatively informal, extending beyond the classroom and scheduled office hours, or are they more formal? How do you feel about the institution's size? Does it have all the resources that you need in order to pursue your research interests?

**Regional issues.** How does the institution fit within the larger community? Does it dominate the area or are there a lot of other things going on as well?

If you are still waiting for a response from the school that is your first choice, you can ask the offering institution for

more time, but bear in mind that the longer you wait, the more likely it is that the institution will withdraw the offer. You can also use the fact that you have received an offer as a way of speeding up the process at your first choice school, but this too can be risky. Weigh the pros and cons of tactics like these before you commit yourself.

## Negotiations

Before you start negotiating, make sure you know two things: what you want and what you're willing to settle for. If you enter the negotiations with a clear idea of your goals, you will come across as more professional, and you will have a better chance of getting what you want. It is also important to realize that the hiring institution is not your adversary. The goal of your negotiations should be to satisfy everyone concerned. Make sure you understand what sort of arrangement is typical for new faculty in this department; if your requests seem unreasonable, you will not make a good impression on your potential future colleagues. Here are some possible topics of negotiation:

**Salary.** First of all, you should find out whether the department has any flexibility on salary. When you raise the issue, you should be ready to answer the question, "How much did you have in mind?" Make sure you have a definite and realistic figure prepared. Before negotiating your salary, you should find out what the norm is in your field and in the hiring department. Good resources for this information include professional associations, the Web, and the annual survey conducted by the American Association of University Professors, which is published in the March-April issue of *Academe*.

**Moving expenses.** If you plan to ask the university to pay for some or all of your moving expenses, you should find out how much the move will cost before you ask. The university might pay for your move directly, or you might be reimbursed later.

**Housing.** If you are moving to a new city, the university might also pay for a second visit for the purpose of finding a place to live. Some institutions, especially in places where housing is unusually expensive or hard to find, offer temporary on-campus housing or programs to help faculty members purchase homes.

**Healthcare.** It can be difficult to discern differences between healthcare packages, so you should ask some questions. Does the health plan cover high-cost items (such as orthodontia, eye care, or physical or psychological therapy) that are necessary to you? How much are insurance premiums? When does the health plan take effect—with your first paycheck, on your first day of work, or six months after you start work? Will the plan cover your partner or dependents? Is it possible to arrange for healthcare coverage beginning in the summer before you arrive?

**Family-related benefits.** Some institutions have programs designed to help the partners and spouses of new faculty members find jobs. Couples who have already negotiated the system can be a good source of advice about such programs. In addition, you might ask about tuition support for your chil-

dren, family access to facilities, and family-leave policies.

**Other questions.** You may also want to ask some of the following questions. Can you arrange for an advance on your first paycheck? Do retirement and life insurance benefits start immediately or after a certain period of time? How are retirement plans structured? Does the institution offer tax-deferred savings plans or pretax reimbursement accounts for health- or child-care costs?

## Accepting and Rejecting Offers

Whether you are accepting or rejecting an offer, you should let the institution know about your decision by phone first, then write a letter confirming what you've said. In a letter of acceptance you should reaffirm any special conditions that the department has offered you. When you reject an offer, do so politely. You don't want to burn any bridges. Thank the department again for the offer, mention the positive attractions it held for you, and let the committee know where you will be going.

## THE END OF THE PROCESS

### If You Don't Receive an Acceptable Offer

In a tight job market, you might not receive an acceptable offer. If this is the case, don't panic; many good candidates find jobs after two or three years on the market. You should formulate a Plan B during the application process, just in case. Often, your best bet will be to take whatever kind of work is most compatible with carrying on your research or finishing your dissertation. A one-year teaching position can be demanding and time-consuming, leaving you little time for your own research. However, if you have limited teaching experience, such a position can be a good way to strengthen your credentials.

If you are not offered a position for which you felt particularly well qualified, you can ask members of the hiring department for constructive feedback. This will work best if you don't seem to be questioning the department's decision. It is unlikely that any member of the department will be willing or able to share every aspect of the decision with you, but their comments can be very helpful the next time you enter the market.

Above all, don't get too discouraged. Chronic discouragement can cause you to come across as cynical and bitter in future applications and interviews, which will only hurt your chances of getting a position. Even if you don't receive a good offer, the time you've spent pursuing an academic position has not been wasted. Navigating the market will be easier when you've have some experience, the good impressions you've made will last, and the people you've met can become part of a lifelong professional network.

### Starting a Job

After you've accepted an offer, you still have a lot of work to do. You'll probably have to move to a new city; you should be settled in by the end of July. Before the fall semester be-

gins, get to know your way around the city, the institution, and the department. Talk to your new colleagues about departmental procedures, grading policies, what kind of students you'll be teaching, and anything else that you're curious about. Make sure you get off on the right foot, not only with your fellow faculty members but also with the rest of the university staff. Although you may have little time to work on your own research during your first semester on the job, you should continue to think about where your work is headed. Try to set aside a day or half a day every week in which to work on your research. Before classes begin, decide what your classroom policies will be, and find out whether the department has any resources that might help you develop your teaching. In general, you should try to be a productive and amiable member

of the department, but you shouldn't let your departmental responsibilities completely overwhelm either your research or your personal life.

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Rice University Career Services Center  
 2nd Floor Student Center  
 6100 S. Main Street-MS 521  
 Houston, TX 77005  
 Phone: 713-348-4055  
 Fax: 713-348-5270  
<http://riceinfo.rice.edu/projects/careers>

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### Some Professional Associations that Publish Job Listings

#### **Anthropology**

American Anthropological Association:  
[www.ameranthassn.org](http://www.ameranthassn.org)

#### **Art and Art History**

College Art Association: [www.collegeart.org](http://www.collegeart.org)

#### **Biochemistry and Cell Biology**

American Institute of Biological Sciences: [www.aibs.org](http://www.aibs.org)

#### **Bioengineering**

Biomedical Engineering Society: <http://mecca.org/BME/BMES/society/index.htm>

#### **Chemical Engineering**

American Institute of Chemical Engineers:  
[www.aiche.org](http://www.aiche.org)

#### **Chemistry**

American Chemical Society: [www.acs.org](http://www.acs.org)

#### **Civil Engineering**

American Society of Civil Engineers: [www.asce.org](http://www.asce.org)

#### **Computational and Applied Mathematics**

Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics:  
[www.siam.org](http://www.siam.org)

#### **Computer Science**

Association of Computing Machinery: [www.acm.org](http://www.acm.org)

#### **Ecology and Evolutionary Biology**

American Institute of Biological Sciences: [www.aibs.org](http://www.aibs.org)

#### **Economics**

American Economic Association: [www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA)

#### **Education**

American Educational Research Association:  
[www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)

#### **Electrical and Computer Engineering**

Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers:  
[www.ieee.org](http://www.ieee.org)

#### **English**

Modern Language Association: [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)

#### **Environmental Science and Engineering**

Association of Environmental Engineering and Science  
 Professors:  
<http://bigmac.civil.mtu.edu/aeesp>

#### **French Studies**

Modern Language Association: [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)

#### **Geology and Geophysics**

Geological Society of America: [www.geosociety.org](http://www.geosociety.org)

#### **German and Slavic Studies**

Modern Language Association: [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)

#### **Hispanic and Classical Studies**

American Philological Association: [www.apaclassics.org/APA-MENU.html](http://www.apaclassics.org/APA-MENU.html)  
 Modern Language Association: [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)

#### **History**

American Historical Association: [www.theaha.org](http://www.theaha.org)

#### **Linguistics**

Linguistics Society of America: [www.lsadc.org](http://www.lsadc.org)

#### **Mathematics**

American Mathematical Society: [www.ams.org](http://www.ams.org)

#### **Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science**

American Society of Mechanical Engineers:  
[www.asme.org](http://www.asme.org)

#### **Philosophy**

American Philosophical Association: [www.udel.edu/apa/](http://www.udel.edu/apa/)

#### **Physics and Astronomy**

American Physical Society: [www.aps.org](http://www.aps.org)

#### **Political Science**

American Political Science Association: [www.apsanet.org](http://www.apsanet.org)

#### **Psychology**

American Psychological Association: [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

#### **Religious Studies**

American Academy of Religion: [www.aar-site.org](http://www.aar-site.org)

#### **Statistics**

American Statistical Association: [www.amstat.org](http://www.amstat.org)