“What to keep in mind if you want an academic position.”

By Brian D. Davison, Asst. Prof. CSE Dept.

davison@cse.lehigh.edu
http://www.cse.lehigh.edu/~brian/

Hopefully you aren’t graduating this summer -- it’s probably too late for most of these ideas!

Recurring themes:
- Be prepared
- Communication skills

As a graduate student

- Polish your English -- make it impeccable (both spoken and written)
- Communicate only in English (except, say, with family)
- Ask native-English-speaking friends and professors to review your writing and talks ahead of time
- Go to conferences, meet people
- Publish papers, give talks -- be seen
- Write one or more funding proposals with your advisor

As a graduate student 2

- Get teaching experience -- teach!
  - Be more than a TA -- be an instructor here, or for a nearby school for an undergraduate course.
  - Get feedback on your teaching and improve
  - Do it again
  - Interact with more than your advisor
    - You’ll need the contacts and references later
    - You want feedback to improve

As a graduate student 3

Other suggestions
- Get a credit card
  - Useful especially when traveling
- Consider getting a laptop
  - Not required, but often helpful as existing computers often work or don’t work in unexpected ways

Ready to graduate with PhD

- Prepare research and teaching statements
  - What do you want to do with your life? Why?
  - How will you do it?
  - What do you want to teach?
  - What do you want to study (i.e., do research)?
  - How will you raise funding for your research?
  - Make the English perfect
  - Get feedback

Ready to graduate 2

Select references
- Your advisor, hopefully will be able to write a long, glowing letter
- You want a few others who can also speak very positively
- You may need teaching references too

Prepare your CV
- Have multiple people review it and give you feedback
Ready to graduate 3

- Apply for a job!
  - Apply to many schools if appropriate area
  - Apply to schools better and worse than Lehigh
    - The better schools at least how to see your name, and you might get lucky and invite you for an interview
  - The worse schools are more likely to interview and hire you
  - Ask advisor about school reputations
- Phone interviews count!
  - The hiring chair is likely to call you to set up the interview and introduce you to the process -- his/her impression of you is important!

Ready to graduate 4

- Schedule interviews
  - Be willing to interview early (Jan-Feb)
  - May need to plan for 2-3 interviews per week
  - Accept as many interview requests as you can but limit to around a dozen
  - Expect to get nothing else done during interview weeks
  - If you are serious, take your spouse!

Ready to graduate 5

- Prepare a job talk
  - Make multiple versions
    - shorter, longer (typical is about 45 minutes)
  - Create an undergraduate teaching talk
    - some schools require it (e.g., Lehigh)
  - Practice, practice, get feedback, revise and improve
  - Make the English perfect (spelling, grammar, word choice, etc.)
  - Show depth of research relatively briefly
    - Most faculty will not be in your area

Job Interviews

- Time to learn whether you are right for them, and whether they are right for you
- Be friendly, smile
- Try to learn names -- take notes!
- Talk about what you can do for the dept
  - What you might teach (hopefully what they need)
  - People with whom you might collaborate
- Do your homework -- review the dept. web site, & faculty personal home pages

Job Interviews 2

- Prepare questions about faculty work in advance in case of slow points in the conversation
- Think ahead about research interests that are unrelated to your thesis
- Get lots of sleep -- interviews can be fun, but they are long and grueling
- Even if you decide right away that this is not the place for you, make a good effort
  - They might be the only offer you get!
  - Word of a bad interview might travel to places in which you are interested
  - You may wish to work with these people in the future

Job Interviews 3

- Ask about non-academic issues (commuting, housing prices)
  - Consider this to be a lifetime move!
- Be prepared to answer questions about
  - what you want in an offer
  - why you are interviewing at this school
  - where else you are interviewing
  - the 2/5/15 minute version of your research
  - ...lots more...
Job Talk
- Practice, practice, practice in advance
- When given a question, slow down and make sure you understand it
  - Try to answer, but be willing to admit that you don’t know the answer
- Make sure you can speak loudly enough to be heard in the back of a lecture hall
- Show your excitement for your work!

Job Offers
- Think in advance about what you want in an offer
  - Certain salary
  - Summer support
  - Graduate student support
  - Funds for a lab and equipment
  - Space for a lab/grad student offices
  - Others?

Job Offers 2
- Think ahead about which places you might accept an immediate offer
- Juggling offers can be difficult
  - Deadline for responses may be before your interviewing is complete
  - Can often negotiate some aspects, but usually a slow & difficult process
  - Many people involved in the formal offer

Show the world
- That you are mature, energetic, and much more than competent.
- That Lehigh is a great school.
- That you are the ideal faculty candidate.

Good luck!