What I Learned from 2025's Academic Job Market

It is widely recognized that 2025 was one of the most difficult academic job markets in recent memory, particularly in the United States. Despite this, with persistence, strategy, and a bit of luck, I secured a tenure-track role and you can too!

For context: In my 5th year, I applied to 192 positions, received 12 first-round interviews, and received 2 flyouts (including the one that lead to my current role at Xavier University, which I accepted in January 2026). I am a US citizen, though it's worth noting that at least one of my international colleagues also secured a tenure-track role that year.

This brief guide is organized into two sections:

- *Preparing for the market*
- *In the market*

Preparing for the Market

Academia is an information game, so your goal should be to gather as much useful information as possible. I certainly didn't know all of this when I began my PhD, I learned it gradually by asking not only my advisor, but also senior faculty, mentors, and peers in my network (including outside of my department and/or university).

Here are the most important steps in order, starting from day one:

1) **Build and maintain your professional network**
    a. Relationships matter, especially since academia is a small world
        i. When I was in the market, my network played a major role in supporting me, including but not limited to: invited seminars, informal advocacy, LinkedIn promotion, and letters of recommendation

2) **Choose your advisor carefully**
    a. Your advisor will significantly shape your PhD experience and job market outcomes, for better or worse
        i. The best way to evaluate a potential is advisor is to talk to their current students, former students, and others in the department.
        ii. Look for patterns in how they mentor, place students, and collaborate

3) **Prioritize conferences (starting no later than your 3rd year)**
    a. This may vary depending on your program but apply to as many conferences as possible just before your first research defense. This way your year before the job market you can focus on presenting and networking (in my case, the 4th year)
        i. Use conferences to present your job market paper and build visibility
        ii. Even for teaching-focused institutions, conferences matter
    b. For example, one detail that stood out to the dean in my application was attending four conferences in 2025, including one international conference

4) **Develop a strong research pipline**
    a. A strong CV is about demonstrating momentum, not just if you published papers. Make sure your CV shows:
        i. Papers under review at journals
        ii. Pre-prints available (e.g. arXiv, NBER, SSRN) when journal submission isn't yet possible
    b. Search committees look for evidence that your pipeline will continue beyond your dissertation

5) **Prepare your job market materials early**
    a. Start several months before going on the market and expect multiple rounds of revision. Core materials include:
        i. CV, Cover Letter, Job Market Paper, Research Statement, Teaching Statement, Diversity Statement
    b. Do not underestimate this step, these documents require significant time and feedback

Navigating the Market

Assuming that you're entering the market in the fall, expect the process to take over your schedule. It's a full time job, so little to no research will be done.

- **Where to look for job postings**
    - HigherEdJobs (link) was the most reliable and user-friendly source in my experience

- **When to look for job postings**
    - Check daily! While you can automate alerts, you should still review listings yourself to avoid missing opportunities
        - For instance, I cross validated with JOE, which occasionally revealed postings a few days earlier than HigherEdJobs

- **When to start applying**
    - Apply no later than the "first consideration" deadline
        - Many institutions begin reviewing applications as soon as that date arrives, so applying early ensures you won't miss the chance to have an interview
        - Look for phrases like "first consideration date" or "review begins on"

- **Where to apply**
    - The standard advice is to apply broadly, and it holds
    - You should also consider adjacent fields when appropriate, this substantially enlarges the pool of jobs you can apply to
        - For example, although my PhD is in Economics, my econometrics training allowed me to apply to:

- Business Analytics (my current role)
- Data Science (resulted in one first-round interview)
- Statistics (resulted in one first-round interview)

- **Preparing for first-round interviews**
  - Preparation is key. Focus on:
    - The job posting itself (they often tell you exactly what they want)
    - The department's needs and growth areas
    - Faculty profiles, especially the search committee
  - This allows you to signal fit by tailoring your answers

- **How to prepare for the flyout**
  - Thorough preparation makes a significant difference. *At minimum*:
    - Research everyone you will meet
    - Prepare for both formal and informal conversations (meals, drives to/from, etc.)
  - Beyond your research talk and/or teaching demonstration, remember:
    - They are evaluating you as a future colleague; be professional, but also approachable and genuine

- **Don't lose perspective**
  - The academic job market is a numbers game
    - Rejections are inevitable, but submitting large number of applications increases the number of successes and helps offset the randomness inherent in the process