

Aca-Media Job Survey Results

As part of our job segment, we sent out a survey to solicit advice and questions from those on the job market, who have been on the job market, or who have sat on job search committees. What follows is a summary of the questions asked and advice given in the responses to the survey. This is an open access document, so feel free to add your own advice, add questions, or answer any of the questions. Original questions and answers should remain in black. If you add to the document, please change the text color to signify that it was added later (and feel free to sign your responses or remain anonymous!)

At the end of the document is a place to share articles and other resources on the job market, independent research, and everything tangentially related!

Questions from job candidates:

- 1. How do you decide whether or not to spend time applying to a job?**
- 2. Why do job ads ask for so much on the first round?**
- 3. How much do you need to tailor each application, and what specifically stands out as useful tailoring? We hear the advice, but what does it look like in practice?**
- 4. They say it's a numbers game, but what is the best way with balancing breadth and depth, and what's the best way to be strategically selective about which jobs to apply for?**
- 5. How seriously should we take job ads? Should we apply if we fit some of the criteria? How often do needs change to the point that we should apply even if we don't think we're a good fit?**
- 6. When's the best time to turn an application in? Is it better to be early? Do committees really start reviewing applications immediately when they say they are? (IE -- what does all the deadline jargon mean?)**
- 7. How do you translate your subfield to committees who may have little familiarity?**
- 8. How do you understand the complex politics of the department to gauge if you should (or shouldn't) speak highly of a certain individual, or propose to teach a particular course, or express an interest in developing a program?**
- 9. What's the best way to navigate the Skype interview?**

- 10. From recent hires: what generally worked and didn't work throughout your application process? Was there any common advice you should have ignored?**
- 11. What is the best forum for feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of our materials, and our research profile? The signals one receives as a PhD student—acceptances to conferences, publications, positive teaching evaluations—at times have little bearing on one's marketability, particularly if one's research or field is not in fashion.**
- 12. Is it OK to contact committee members to ask about the position? Even though there's always a contact name given, I'm not sure if it's kosher to actually contact them.**
- 13. I'm a young female candidate and have heard horror stories about gender discrimination. Will the fact that I'm married and might want children be held against me? Do you even wear a wedding ring to job talk? Do I avoid any mention of a partner? It feels ridiculous to have to ask this but....I have heard...**

Advice from job candidates (or recent candidates) to other candidates:

- 1. Do one application per day or set goals for yourself.**
- 2. Do what you have to do and don't beat yourself up.**
- 3. Get organized! Get all of your boilerplate material together before the fall cycle begins. Create a spreadsheet to sort the deadlines, required materials, contact info and then work through it as best as you can.**
- 4. Use the job wiki judiciously. It can become easily a timesuck and anxiety producer, but it also helps to have a place where people can receive off-the-record updates.**
- 5. Foster relationships with early-career full time faculty, because they're the ones who have been on the market most recently and actually understand what's happening.**
- 6. Network at conferences. While nobody will admit it, who you know matters as much as what you know and what you've written.**
- 7. I was always told that you should spend 80% of your time tailoring letters for the top 20% of your applications, but every application needs to be tailored to some extent.**

8. **Have an exit strategy.** Decide how long you can stand to do this and ask yourself, at the end of each season, if you really want to continue.
9. **Sharing failure is always cathartic.** It's not advice, per se, but it helps junior scholars realize they are not alone in their dozens and dozens of applications that resulted in only a few skype calls.
10. **I think folks on the job market need their experiences normalized-- practically and emotionally.** They need to know that it's awful for everyone, that they aren't alone in this experience, and they aren't alone when they have doubts.

Advice from candidates to senior scholars:

1. **It would be great if senior scholars were willing to mentor those on the job market and those in precarious positions.** I would love feedback on my materials, which jobs to apply for, tips for campus visits, etc. That sort of support doesn't seem to be out there.
2. **It'd be great if SCMS had a session where students could sign up to have their job materials reviewed by someone who's sat on search committees.**
3. **Pay adjuncts better.** Advocate for adjuncts. Pressure their admins to get more TT jobs.
4. **If you advise PhD students, you need to educate yourself about career options that are not academic.** Your students need additional options, including co-ops, internships, etc.
5. **Professionalization a part of every graduate course you teach in some way.** In other words, every course should be framed around a professional "deliverable"—even if that's just a seminar paper, make explicit connections between what you do in the course to how it can help build a young scholar's professional profile. And try to move beyond banal questions in your "professionalization" workshops (you know, where that tell candidates how to format their CV)—get at the more substantial issues of how to tailor your letter to a job, how to present yourself as a scholar-on-the-rise rather than as a desperate graduate student, how to stay emotionally healthy on the market, etc.
6. **INTRODUCE US TO OTHER SCHOLARS.** I can't stress this enough. If you see us at conferences, invite us to events, drag us over to meet people, etc. We don't always

have a good way of meeting senior scholars on our own.

7. “Please respect the time of applicants. We are overworked, emotionally burdened, and brokety-broke broke. Many of us are cobbling together multiple jobs just to keep afloat. We are often desperate, and will often put ourselves through considerable hardship just to apply and interview for your job. Many of us are adjuncts with no job security and few resources. (For example, just finding a quiet office in which to hold a Skype interview is tough when you don't have an office!)”
8. “Search committees must realize that precarity has an enormous impact on how productive students/job seekers are. If you didn't get a fellowship, you need to pay your bills in some other fashion, and often that means less time for research, writing, and conferences. Pay attention to the inequality that abounds in academia and how it shapes candidates' CVs.”

Advice from faculty to candidates:

1. Remember these searches are highly idiosyncratic to the needs of the department. Those needs shift constantly as the committee reads the applicant files. As much as it feels personal, try to remember that it is not.
2. Read the job description C L O S E L Y. There are all sorts of details there that are significant. You are trying to fill 12 holes in your curricular needs with one person. (Impossible!)
3. For assistant/year positions: If you make it to the on campus interview, you don't need to prove your scholarly chops as much as you need to prove that you have interesting things to say in your talk, that you can teach core courses, and that are the kind of person that they want to have around as a colleague for 30 years.

Generally: the final decision is always fraught with complications that are beyond your control.

Faculty on Academic Labor

1. We need for senior faculty to pressure administrators to conduct interviews according to best practice guidelines and to create secure positions that allow individuals to earn a living wage and effectively use their advanced training in their teaching and research, for faculty to unionize and to pressure their unions to make secure positions a key demand in negotiations, for faculty to organize strikes to make everyone aware

of the statistics, to pressure private institutions and state legislatures to reduce administrative salaries, and to reverse the race to increase the percentage of people in precarious positions.

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