

VSOE Panel for PhD and Post-Docs

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Preparing to Interview for an Academic Position

HH Personal Advice!

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Early-Mid PhD Students

- **Lesson #1** define your “life” dreams early on.
 - ❑ Academic positions, best paper awards, high salary (e.g., great car, house, etc.), consulting, starting a company, etc. are not that hard to get! And, they don’t have to define your life.
 - ❑ What are you really after?

- **Lesson #2** You don’t need to know now what you’ll end up doing. Remember Lesson #1.

- **Lesson #3** Do the best you can in your PhD. Change the world! Define hard problems! Be academic! Stay Ambitious! That way, you’ll have plenty of options later on.



Late PhD Students

- How do I know if I like to become a faculty?
 - ❑ Refer to Lesson #1
 - ❑ Talk to young and old faculty members at various universities
 - ❑ Remember everyone is different

- Shall I post-doc?
 - ❑ It depends! Post-doc is not a degree! And, salary is low!
 - ❑ The expectations from a post-doc are much more compared with a fresh PhD. i.e., if you post-doc, your output must be MUCH more than your final PhD year.
 - ❑ Good idea if you want to change your field and/or to work in a Nobel laureate's lab.



Post-Docs

- How do I know if I like to become a faculty?
 - So, what are you doing as a post-doc? You like to work hard and not get paid?! 😊

- What do I do during my post-doc?
 - As much academic work as you possibly can.
 - Learn some other things too: working with PhD students, writing grants, etc.
 - Do not become a high-level manager!
 - Do the hard work yourself! Don't give it to PhD students!!!



What to Do?

- **Lesson #4** Apply to as many places as you can (even if their advertisement does not include your specific area)
- Do not limit yourself to top schools, certain geographic areas, etc.
- System has memory!
 - I am a member of faculty search committee in Snob-University! I won't even look at your University for hiring. Oh! This guy has got "n" interviews! Maybe, he is good!
- Spread your name! And, get as many people as possible to know you. You will need them later on!
- Many (good) universities will admit the BEST person, even if she/he is outside of their specific need.



How to Prepare a CV?

- Put the important stuff on the first page!
 - e.g., For universities, papers are more important than patents. Put that upfront.
- Mention your specific research interests (current and future) on the first page of your CV.
- Awards and honors must be on the first page.
- **Lesson #5** Your CV must be shining.



How to Prepare a Research Statement?

- Have vision!
 - If something is on the cover of Spectrum, it is probably too late!
 - Read websites, Scientific American, Nature, Science, etc.
 - Talk to others, within and outside your field.
- Spend a lot of time on this!
- Give it to as many people as possible (outside your field) to read and comment. Don't show it to your advisor! 😊
- This is the document that tells how good you can sell.



How to Prepare a Research Statement?

- **Lesson #6** In research statement you **MUST**
 - Sell your field (as the best field in the world)
 - Sell yourself (as the superstar in that field)
- Don't tailor it for different places! This should represent **YOU** and not what the universities want!!!



How to Prepare a Teaching Statement?

- **Lesson #7** If you're applying to research universities, the importance of this is usually secondary.
- Some universities care more about this than others, especially teaching-intensive places.



Recommendation Letters

- **Lesson #7** You need top faculty to champion you
 - Letters must be LONG and SPECIFIC
 - Engage with faculty other than your advisor, so that they know YOU and YOUR WORK well.
 - Talk to them, in detail, about your work and future vision before asking them to write a letter. Do not ask over an email!!!
 - If they are not enthusiastic in person, maybe you should find someone else.



I Got the Call! 😊

- Congratulations! Hurdle #1 is clean!
- **Lesson #9** Interview is EVERYTHING
 - System resets! Background, etc. don't matter from now on.



Interview Preparations

- Read about ALL faculty in the department, especially those that you will be talking to.
- Ask for your meeting schedule early on.
- Don't check in your luggage!
- Have a copy of your presentation handy (laptop + USB + transparencies)
- Sleep well the night before!
- Have laser pointer!
- Have energy bars!
- Practice your talk 1000000 times! You must know EVERY slide by heart! Practice in front of tough audience.



Interview Presentation

- **Lesson #10** Prepare the BEST presentation in the world!
 - Vision (e.g., some high-level figures, graphs, etc.)
 - Depth of academic work (e.g., equations, graphs, etc.)
 - Outstanding delivery (that's how you're judged for teaching and selling your ideas)
 - Have LOTS of energy! Talk loud! Walk! Look at everyone!
 - LISTEN to the questions, THINK, and then answer.
 - Know where the question is coming from. Most people in the room have NO idea what you are talking about.
 - Do not show anything that you don't know 100%.

- **Lesson #6** applies here as well.



Interview Day

- Be on time!
- Dress professionally!
- Appear with LOTS OF ENERGY throughout the day (8am – 8pm)
- Engage in all conversations! Learn how to eat and talk!
- Have something unique to say to individual faculty. Try not to fight with them. But, do stand-up to your views.
- Don't scare the department chair, dean, etc. by telling them you need lots of money, you may graduate late, etc.
- **Lesson #11** After all, everyone likes a good colleague for a lifetime!



After Interview

- Send personalized email to all people you met or those who asked you questions during your talk.
 - Follow-up on unanswered questions, etc.
- Learn from this for the second interview.
- Stay on call!



I Got THE Call!

- Great! Now, you have the upper hand!
- Come talk to me then! I'll tell you some secrets! 😊



Then What?

- Welcome to the 24/7 academic lifestyle!
- Physically you control your life! Mentally you won't! 😊



Good Luck!
Faculty Position is a Lot of Fun! 😊

