P4: Interviewing

Phone and on-site.
.Generic Faculty Job Search Process

1. Send in your application materials. (≈ Nov/Dec)
2. Interested schools will reach out. (≈ Dec/Jan)
   a. Some (most?) departments will want to do a phone/skype interview.
   b. If that interview goes well they will invite you for an on-site interview.
3. On-site interviews (≈ Jan-Apr)
   a. Your host is most on your side (supporter in your area)
4. Offers (≈ Mar-May)
5. Second visits and negotiation (≈ Apr-Jun)

- Some tips on the process
  ○ Apply broadly (there is a lot of randomness in this process)
  ○ Don’t over interview
    ■ Travel + interviewing is hard, and you can burn yourself out
Phone/Skype Interview: What to expect

- Likely 30 minutes
- Sometimes they will send you a list of who will be there, sometimes they won’t.
  - Members of the search committee
  - Perhaps someone from HR
  - Perhaps someone in the dept familiar with your area
- Goals of the hiring department
  - Get questions answered they had about your application
  - Determine if you are fit with their search
  - Meet internal HR requirements
- Your goals
  - Demonstrate that you can explain your research to a broad but technical audience
  - Convince them that you are a serious candidate and someone they need to meet
- HR Realities
  - Often there is a set list of questions that are asked to all candidates
  - So, expect generic questions, and try to give answers that are relevant to you (not just what you think they want to hear)
Phone/Skype Interview: Common questions

- Can you explain your research, and what the main contributions are?
- What classes would you like to and are you qualified to teach?
- What funding sources are available for your work?
- How will you promote diversity?
- How would you collaborate in our department?
- Do you have any questions for us?
Phone/Skype Interview: Tips

- Be prepared to explain your work succinctly and clearly.
- Do a little homework on the department that is interviewing you.
  - You don’t want to just have memorized their website, but pointing out ongoing activities that would demonstrate fit is a good idea.
- Always remember that you are the expert on your dissertation topic.
- Remember to listen as well, you don’t have to dominate all of the talking.
- Have questions prepared to ask the committee.
  - How far along are you in the search process?
On-site interview: What to expect

- 1-2 days
  - 8am - 5pm (+ dinner)
  - ≈ 10 meetings with faculty in the department
  - Job talk
  - Dinner with ≈3 faculty
  - Meeting with Ph.D. students
- Your schedule will be sent to you, but often the day or night before
  - And it sometimes changes
- Sometimes the meetings will be with multiple faculty (but that should be on your schedule)
- Your host can help with anything that comes up, or with any questions you have
- Job talk is **most important**
- Meetings with faculty are **very important**
On-site interview: preparing

- You can request meetings with people at the school
  - Maybe in a different department that you are interested in.
  - Or a good potential collaborator.
- You need a very strong job talk
  - That is a whole topic by itself.
- Preparing for meetings with faculty members
  - Learn what their interests are, what projects they work on.
  - Look for overlap with your interests.
  - Insightful questions on their work are helpful.
  - Think about collaboration opportunities.
- Preparing for a meeting with students.
  - What type of advisor do you see yourself being?
  - Have you advised students in the past?
On-site interview: one-on-one meetings

- These can vary a lot based on individual people.
- Many different flavors:
  a.  “Sorry, I missed your talk, tell me about your work.”
  b.  “I thought your work on X was very interesting, how does that relate to…”
  c.  “I thought your work on X was very interesting, we solved that 10 years ago by…”
  d.  “I was thinking about Y, which relates to your work on X, is that something we could collaborate on?”
  e.  “Could you explain the technical concept Z which is related to your work?”
  f.  “So where is this work going next?”
  g.  “What is the first thing you want to work on?” or “What might be the title of you first student’s dissertation?”
- Some people will be close to your area, others not so much.
- Tips
  a.  Having the person excited about collaborating with you is a great outcome.
  b.  The person will almost certainly ask: “Do you have any questions for me?” So, come prepared with a list of questions about the department/school/area/culture/collaborations/support/etc.
  c.  Teaching-track professors are more likely to ask about teaching classes.
On-site interview: other potential meetings

- Department chair
  - The chair is wearing two hats: researcher and department head.
    - You want to engage both.
  - Can ask about department policies.
    - Promotion and tenure
    - Support and mentoring for jr. faculty
    - Teaching expectations

- Dean (or someone in the dean’s office)
  - May or may not be anywhere near your area
  - Often very used to talking to a range of engineering disciplines, however, and may have more technical questions than you expect.
  - Ask about school vision, growth, support, etc.
  - Follow up on issues or concerns you hear from other meetings.

- Support staff
  - What resources you need to be successful from day one (technology, space, other resources, etc)?

- Current students
  - Will you be a good advisor?

- Search committee
  - Again, likely generic questions (guide the answers to what you want to talk about)
On-site interview: dinner

- This is an interview too!
- Good time to ask questions about the department.
- Conversation may not have anything to do with your research.
  - Your other interests
  - Good time to highlight other projects or areas of interest
- Tell your host about any dietary restrictions.