

Postdoc & Graduate Academic Chat

Special Zoom Discussion

The "Dark Search Phase" of Your Academic Job Search.

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

There are several times during your postdoc when you are not yet ready to explicitly apply for an academic position but when you can still make yourself known to potential colleges and universities without explicitly. This is known as the "dark search phase" of your exploration and we will discuss how to manage it in the most effective and efficient way.

READINGS

- (1) Explore Now, Search Later**
- (2) Considering a career in academia? Here are some (observed) realities**

(1) Explore Now, Search Later
Richard M. Reis, PhD

Consider this:

You have been single for quite a while. You are secure with yourself and enjoy your independence, but you are starting to feel like you're ready for a relationship. You've done your share of dating and have had a few "trial runs" but now you want to really find, "the one."

So, where do you look for him or her? You could simply hope he/she finds you, or you could figure out some ways in which your chances of having an encounter with a compatible person are greatly enhanced. One way may be to determine, and then select, certain places you'd be more likely to meet people with interests similar to your own.

Until now, you've met people mostly by chance, online or at social gatherings. While you know you can't "shop" for Mr. or Ms. Right, you do think, and your non-single friends have told you, looking in the right places can make a big difference.

You are aware that first you must decide what type of person you're looking for, including what kind of values and goals you would want them to have. In order to determine this however, you must first take a closer look at yourself and be secure with what you find. You need to draw on your earlier explorations and experiences and connect them with your particular interests and desires.

Once you've got a mental picture of the person you want to find, then think of the places you would most likely meet him or her. Are they the same places you like to go? Is your image of this person very general or is there something unique that you're looking for? The image you have could make a big difference in where you look and how much "competition" you might encounter. If what you want is not all that special it probably won't take long to meet someone, but chances are the person you do meet will only have some of what you're looking for. However, if you're seeking someone really special, it may be more of a challenge to find, and "get" him or her, but much more rewarding in the end.

Your chances of finding the right person at the right place improve tremendously if you take the time to decide what your best options are before you set out on the hunt. This way, when the time comes, you will know where not to look as well as where to look. You will know the kinds of people you were seeking, and perhaps could even modify your approach to increase your chances of finding the "one.". You could also ask other non-single friends about their experiences in finding a mate. The information they provide would not substitute for your own exploring, but it could give you valuable insights on where to focus your efforts. Such insights would be helpful in spite of the fact that each person would have his/her own preference for a particular partner and areas in which to look.

Explore Now, Search Later

In seeking an academic position, as in seeking a mate, it is essential that you explore before you hunt. You need to compare what's available (types of

institutions, positions, and locations.) with what you need and want (capabilities, interests, and values.). Only then will you be in a position to seek out - apply for- specific jobs. Your resources (time and knowledge) are limited, your competition is fierce (many other applicants), and you have to make every opportunity (application and job interview) count. By taking the time to explore first, you will be in a position to zero in on specific options with a targeted effort that increases your chances of success. Exploring exposes you to various institutions and people without the risk of rejection. It allows you to measure, or benchmark, yourself against certain settings and situations without expending limited resources that you will later need for the actual job search.

This article is about exploring and identifying the possibilities, the next is about searching and applying for positions, and the last is about closing the deal and getting the results you want.

The approach we will take in these three articles involves:

• Exploring (what's out there).

(1) Deciding what you want; your values, interests, needs, capabilities and strengths in relationship to academic possibilities.

(2) Researching what's out there; background reading, discussions and visits to other schools.

(3) Preparing for the search; putting 1 and 2 together.

• Searching (for specific opportunities).

(4) Setting the stage; how academic positions are established, what departments look for in new faculty, what jobs are viable, and the time frame for applications.

(5) Preparing your application materials; cover letters, CV's, letters of recommendation/and teaching portfolios.

(6) Applying for positions; conferences, campus visits, the academic job talk.

- Finding (the position that's right for you).

(7) Negotiations; principles for responding to job offers.

(8) If you don't get the job you want; the Multiple-Option approach revisited.

The biggest mistake job seekers make is to go immediately to steps (5) and (6), while often skipping steps (1) through (4) altogether.

Let us begin then with a look at what you want.

Deciding What You Want

In examining your values, interests, needs, capabilities and strengths in relationship to various academic possibilities, keep in mind that you are trying to figure out how you want to live your life, not just how you want to manage your career. One way to address these important matters is to ask yourself specific questions about the types of institutions, types of academic positions, and types of locations or settings in which you would be willing to spend the next several years.

You need to be honest in your answers to these questions, and not deny/ignore what is truly important to you. At the same time you are unlikely to get all the things you want and therefore need to be clear about what is really non-negotiable (such as academic positions in the same city for a two-professor couple) as opposed to what is merely desirable (such as teaching in your specialty area vs. teaching general introductory courses). Exploring gives you a chance to identify your boundary conditions; what's negotiable, and what's not worth further time and effort.

Your Type of Institution

First consider types of institutions and departments. The vast majority of candidates with Ph.D.'s, received them from Research I and II universities, with the remaining doing so from Doctorate I and II institutions. However, the majority of all Ph.D. candidates attended as undergraduates, smaller

liberal arts colleges or larger public universities granting bachelors and masters, but not doctoral degrees. In other words, some of you have had exposure to more than one kind of institution, while others have spent all your student and postdoc time at a research university. Now you need to ask how these types of schools fit with your particular values, interests, needs, capabilities and strengths.

Alison Bridger knew her options would be limited with a major in atmospheric sciences. She wanted to teach meteorology and there were only a small number of schools in North America with such departments. Teaching was a priority, but she also liked doing research, although as she put it, "I knew I wasn't going to be turning out a major paper in my field every year." San Jose State University (Masters I) turned out to be the ideal place for her to achieve both these objectives.

Of course, even institutions of the same classification can vary considerably in terms of such things as student selectivity, the emphasis placed on various forms of scholarship, and the likelihood of obtaining tenure. Mary M. Heiberger and Julia M. Vick, authors of the Academic Job Search Handbook, have developed a list of contrasting institutional possibilities. In considering an academic position, they ask; Do you want to work for:

- A university with a large enrollment in doctoral programs where tenure depends on research (and increasingly, at least adequate teaching), or a public or private institution where both teaching and research are highly valued?
- A school with a distinctive personality, such as a strong religious affiliation, or one with a liberal education approach?
- An institution that caters to heavy involvement in the life of the school, or one in which you primarily identify with the department?
- A school which is highly selective, or one which offers educational opportunities to a broad section of the community?
- An institution where there are many graduate courses to

teach, or one where most of the teaching is at the undergraduate level?

- An institution with a history of involvement with industry, via co-op programs for example, or one that is more "academic" in orientation?
- An institution where there are good prospects of getting tenure, or one that is more challenging and selective?
- A department where socializing with other faculty is expected, or one where more professional involvement is encouraged?
- A hierarchically structured department, or one that places an emphasis on participatory decision making?
- A department in which you would be the first person of your gender, social or ethnic background, or one in which you feel most others are like you?
- A department where the faculty age distribution suggests a large turnover in the next few years, or one in which there is a more uniform distribution of age and rank?

No single institution will have all the characteristics you desire. However, identifying your initial preferences will give you a reference point from which to make various trade-offs as your exploration deepens.

Your Type of Appointment

Now let us consider various kinds of appointments. Most of our discussion will center on full-time, tenure-track positions at the assistant professorship level. Such appointments are of greatest interest to most recent Ph.D.'s or postdocs. Nevertheless, tenure-track positions bring with them tenure requirements and conditions, which may not suit everyone's interests and needs. Many other kinds of appointments exist, one of which may be more suited to your situation. Examples include temporary, or fixed-term appointments, part-time appointments, consulting appointments, and adjunct and research professorships, to name a few. Such appointments can provide

experiences that eventually lead to permanent positions, meet special needs and circumstances, or both.

For a variety of reasons, Bezhad Razavi wanted to teach and do research at only one of four top Research I universities. At the time of his graduation from Stanford, there were no openings in his field at any of these institutions and so he decided to go to work for a major industrial research laboratory (AT&T Bell Laboratories) and accept part-time teaching appointments at local universities as a way of maintaining his "readiness" should a full-time position open up at one of the four schools of interest to him.

In exploring various types of positions, you should ask:

- Is a tenure-track position the only appointment I would consider?
- Are there circumstances in which a full-time temporary appointment (three years for example) would make sense?
- If I mainly want to teach, would a part-time appointment satisfy my interests and needs?
- If I am waiting for my spouse to finish his/her education, or if the right tenure-track position is not yet available, is a part-time or temporary appointment appropriate in the interim?
- Must the appointment be in the same department as that from which I earned my degree or might it be in a related department?

Your Setting

Location and setting are certainly considerations for most job seekers, but particularly so for tomorrow's professors. As noted in Chapter 1, there is often at best one or two academic institutions of a given type in any town or city. Because of the way academia works, professors don't move from school to school in the same way scientists and engineers often do in industry. Many faculty positions end up being decades-long, or even life-

long appointments, and for this reason location and setting take on added importance.

In exploring various locations, you will obviously consider the physical and cultural environment. Personal preferences and family considerations may also play a part. In addition, you should look at the relationship between the institutions you are considering and other local colleges and universities, industrial companies, and national laboratories, particularly if these entities are ones with which you will want to interact.

Norm Whitley, a professor of mechanical engineering at the University of New Orleans, in New Orleans, Louisiana, liked the idea of living in the South and not too far from his wife's family in Oklahoma. He was also looking for a school where teaching and research were given about equal weight. In addition, he wanted to live in a city large enough to provide opportunities for his wife's social work specialty. In this case, New Orleans fit the bill.

For Mark Hopkins, a professor of electrical engineering at Rochester Institute of Technology, (R.I.T.), in Rochester, New York, being close to certain kinds of industries was very important. He had had little industrial experience prior to obtaining his Ph.D., and he wanted to be at a school where he could spend some of his time doing research at a nearby company. R.I.T provided such an opportunity with a program that allowed him to teach at R.I.T. while also doing research at the Xerox Wilson Center for Research and Technology in nearby Webster, New York.

Of course, all of the above may take a back seat when it comes down to two professors who just want to be together.

For Noel and Kirk Schulz anything would have been an improvement over their arrangement of the last few years, in which Noel was a Ph.D. student in electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota in Twin Cities, Minnesota, and Kirk was a professor in chemical engineering at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, North Dakota, some 325 miles away. When, upon graduation Noel was not offered a position at the University of North Dakota, she and Kirk set out to find the right school that would welcome both of them. Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Michigan with its balanced emphasis on teaching and research turned out to meet their needs.

Researching What's Out There

Now that you have a better idea of what you want, you can move on to learning more about what actually exists. You have already begun to do so through your reading of this book, informal discussions with faculty from other institutions, and in some cases, visits to other colleges and universities. Your efforts must now become more focused and purposeful, but remember you are still exploring. Searching for specific positions will come soon enough.

There are three approaches to take in your explorations of other institutions. The first is background reading, the second is discussions with students and faculty familiar with these institutions, and the third is occasional visits to other colleges and universities.

Background Reading and Searching

Just as would-be travelers can learn important things about a distant place through books and travel references, you can learn much about specific academic institutions from resource guides, directories, college catalogs, and the Internet pages. Your library and bookstore have dozens of guidebooks that give brief summaries about various colleges and universities. Many of these are written primarily for students, but they can also be a source of information for prospective faculty.

"Surfing the Net," is of course also a good way to explore other institutions, their programs, and faculty. You will want to use these resources later when you are zeroing in on specific institutions (searching), but for now use them as an interesting way to explore. Here are some good online sources that you might want to explore:

- [**Chronicle of Higher Education**](#)
- [**Higher Ed Jobs**](#)
- [**Academic 360**](#)
- [**Education Week**](#)
- [**Academic Careers Online**](#)

Talking to Others

Reading, of course, can do just so much. You also need to talk with those who have direct experience at other institutions. As noted in Chapter 4, it is important to initiate contacts with such people early on and not just in the last year of your graduate study or post-doc. By now you should have a data base of contacts that include:

- Former students and postdocs currently working in academia.
- Faculty at your current institution, especially your advisor.
- Faculty you met through seminars and other visits to your institution.
- Faculty at other institutions with whom you have corresponded about your research.
- Faculty you met at conferences and other professional meetings.
- Industry and government contacts who may have connections to academia.

Now is the time to draw on your network for information about different institutions while at the same time letting them know of your interests in an academic position. Do so through personal contact, not through mass mailings to everyone on your list. Telephone calls or personal appointments are best, but you may want to start with electronic or hard copy mail. Be sure to personalize your communication. Make references to your past interactions and say that you will follow-up with a telephone call. Don't send other information such as your curriculum vitae via electronic mail; it's both irritating and presumptuous. Call first, then follow-up in the appropriate way with additional information if requested. Remember, you're seeking information, not applying for positions.

Visiting Other Institutions

Undoubtedly your travel budget is quite limited, so you can't fly off and visit lots of other schools. However, you can do more in this regard than you

might think if you look for leveraging opportunities. Start by contacting the people you know at institutions in your area. Even if these institutions are not among those to which you are likely to apply, just visiting another campus will give you a different perspective. Of course, some of these schools might well represent the types of institutions to which you will want to apply.

You can also take advantage of trips made to cities or towns for other purposes. Vacations, visits to family and friends, attendance at conferences, and industrial sites, all provide opportunities to spend an extra day or two at a local college or university. Contact people you know at these places (as far in advance as possible), tell them you are going to be in the area, and ask if you can stop by for a chat. Assure them that you are simply trying to learn more about their type of institution, rather than asking to be considered for a specific position.

Previously we talked about questions to ask and observations to make with respect to your current institution. It is a relatively simple matter to now do the same with the institutions you are visiting. Russ Hall, senior acquisitions editor for Prentice Hall, has, by his own estimate, visited over 300 institutions of higher education in North America. Hall looks at such visits in the same way as he looks at visits to someone's house. "Every house has a story to tell about the people who live there," he says. "You just have to look for it in the right way." The size of faculty offices and the physical proximity of departments and buildings to each other is one useful piece of information. "You can also tell a lot about the 'haves' and 'have-nots' on campus just by looking at the buildings," he notes.

Other things to look for include: how rushed are the professors and students? Do people in other departments, or even the same department for that matter, know each other? Are there social events that bring people together within and across departments or do most people function independently and in relative isolation? Answers to these questions can tell you a lot about a particular institution and department, including the direction in which it might be heading.

The skills you have acquired in obtaining your Ph.D., such as an ability to learn quickly, observe carefully, and generalize in many situations, are just the ones to apply in your explorations of other institutions.

Preparing for the Search

Your purpose in exploring is to discover new possibilities, some of which you might not have considered before. By comparing what you've learned about your interests, values, and needs, with the types of institutions that exist, you can now focus on a plan of researching and applying to specific schools that have what you want.

It's a bit like the 20-question game we all played as youngsters. When I played this game with my son we only used ten questions, the limit of both our attention spans. I would tell him I was thinking of an object in the house and he could ask me up to ten "yes/no" questions that might lead him to it. In the beginning he had no strategy at all. He just started guessing. Once in a while he would guess right but most of the time he would use up all ten questions without getting to the object. As time went on however, he began to develop a crude strategy. He would ask if the object was upstairs, and be happy if I said "yes", and unhappy if I said "no", not realizing he had the same information in both cases. Eventually, he got to the point where he would ask about attributes, i.e., "Is it touching the floor?", "Is it made out of wood?", and "Is it alive?" This approach would usually get him into the right room knowing a lot about the characteristics of the object. He could then use his last two or three questions to try, often successfully, to identify it.

The purpose of your exploring is to use the information you have gathered to both eliminate possibilities like research universities and the northeastern part of the United States for example, as well as to identify possibilities, for instance masters and baccalaureate institutions in the western U.S. and Canada. Once you have an idea of what you want in an academic position, as well as what may actually be available, you can bring this information together in a plan that will lead to desired job offers.

Summary

We began this article by explaining why in seeking an academic position, it is essential for you to explore before you search. You need to compare what's available (types of institutions, positions, and locations) with what you need and want (capabilities, interests, and values). Only then will you be in a position to search - apply for specific jobs. We began by looking at

how to decide what you want by examining the types of institutions, appointments and settings of greatest interest to you. Ways of researching what's out there, including background readings, talking to various people, and visiting other institutions were discussed next. We then looked at the specifics needed to prepare for the job search process that will be discussed in the next article.

(2) Considering a career in academia? Here are some (observed) realities

By Christina Skorobohacz

From *Academic Matters* OCUFA's Journal of Higher Education

June 8, 2010

Academic Matters is published by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, representing more than 17,000 professors and academic librarians who are employed in Ontario universities.

Thinking about becoming an academic? A graduate student and aspiring academic reflects on a semester-long internship shadowing an assistant professor. Anyone contemplating an academic career will find this reflection of particular interest.

During my master's studies, I had the opportunity to shadow an assistant professor working within a faculty of education. This educational internship enabled me to observe first-hand the multifaceted roles and responsibilities associated with being a developing scholar on the tenure-track at a mid-sized university in Ontario. Although the observations and insights that I share can by no means be generalized to every institution, department, or professor, they inform my emerging understanding of academic work and bring me one step closer to determining whether this career path is right for me.

The internship context

I embarked upon an internship to shadow one professor over four months. My internship was facilitated by my master's advisor, who creatively re-interpreted the formal curriculum (a for-credit internship course) in a way

that provided the flexibility needed to align with my interests and career aspirations. Knowing that I was contemplating an academic career, she suggested that I spend some time shadowing a beginning professor in order to get a better sense of the nature of academic work. She approached a pre-tenured colleague whom she believed was actively engaged in teaching, research, and service, who could provide me with a realistic sense of a new scholar's daily work life, and who would be willing to acknowledge openly both the opportunities as well as the challenges associated with being an emerging academic. "Rose" (a pseudonym) graciously agreed, and thus my internship experience began. Together, the three of us (Rose, my advisor, and me) negotiated a structure for the internship that involved my: (a) conducting weekly observations of Rose as she juggled a variety of work roles on and off campus, (b) participating in debriefing sessions to critically discuss my observations with her, (c) engaging in formal one-on-one conversations with Rose around select themes of interest to me (e.g., gender issues in academe, balancing personal and professional roles, academic identity), and (d) keeping a reflective journal to document my questions, insights, and sense-making.

One professor's work roles

Over the course of my semester-long internship, I observed Rose negotiate 22 distinct work roles. These roles included (but were not limited to): teacher, researcher, grader, thesis supervisor, advisor, mentor, committee member, colleague, communicator, presenter, independent learner, responder, writer, listener, chair, collaborator, decision maker, leader, team player, analyzer, activist, and inventor. Although some of these roles have been characterized as diametrically opposed (e.g., teacher versus researcher, or listener versus communicator), they often overlapped, complemented one another, and enhanced Rose's understanding of, and performance within, her other roles. As she moved between different environments, she was able to draw upon her multiple skills, adapting herself to fit her surroundings and exhibiting the necessary characteristics to help her succeed in that moment. Below, I describe two of her roles in more detail, illustrating the responsibilities she negotiated, the characteristics she exhibited, and the challenges she faced while assuming these roles.

While taking on the role of chair in various contexts (e.g., in a committee meeting and for a thesis defence), Rose was responsible for demonstrating leadership, facilitating discussion, providing direction, keeping proceedings on track, taking notes, identifying central issues, knowing the process,

understanding the language, following the agenda, embodying professionalism, setting a positive tone, anticipating issues or challenges, redirecting the conversation when necessary, clarifying concepts, asking questions, eliciting feedback, disseminating information, as well as understanding and following the institutional hierarchy. She easily referenced a host of terms and acronyms, which quickly led me to realize that mastering the terminology is a first step towards participating in academic discourse. While taking on this role, Rose embodied the following characteristics or behaviours: willing, inviting, leading, guiding, actively listening, welcoming, communicative, supportive, attentive, proactive, organized, interested, open-minded, focused, knowledgeable, professional, direct, clear, and realistic. Our de-briefing sessions opened my eyes to a variety of tensions that might arise for novice chairs. For instance, I learned about the apprehension that some pre-tenured professors might feel towards taking on leadership roles such as chairing meetings or committees, particularly when such roles involve taking a stand that is in direct opposition to the views of more experienced (and tenured) professors. I gathered that while performing the role of chair, pre-tenured professors might engage in self-censorship and approval-seeking as means to protect themselves from feelings of intense vulnerability and scrutiny. Furthermore, Rose noted that beginning academics might not yet be fully cognizant of the subtle subtexts operating within meetings (e.g., interpersonal dynamics, non-verbal communication, as well as hidden agendas and motivations), which can make it difficult to avert conflict. Our follow-up conversations shed new light on the complexities involved in negotiating this role, which I would not have surmised from my observations of Rose, who appeared to be a skilful, confident, and outspoken chair.

Assuming the role of researcher, Rose was responsible for carving out a program of research, adhering to research ethics policies, networking with others, finding collaborators, protecting participants, seeking out and applying for funding, identifying venues to disseminate her research, presenting research findings, publishing, asking questions, knowing the literature in her field, providing strong rationales, upholding ethical obligations, documenting her research productivity, as well as maintaining personal and professional integrity. As she took on this role, Rose was: innovative, informative, adaptive, protective, evaluative, flexible, ethical, professional, careful, social, analytical, knowledgeable, organized, detailed, focused, future oriented, observant, driven, passionate, and inquiring. Professors are constantly required to display an ethical consciousness in

their research work within and outside their institution. I learned from our follow-up conversations that negotiating between discrepant conceptualizations of “ethical research practices” across contexts can prove difficult. In particular, Rose noted that challenges exist when the general public does not subscribe to the same ethical requirements that are upheld by university research ethics boards. Helping communities and citizens more fully appreciate the need for ethical practice is essential. Rose alluded to other challenges facing ethical researchers including: (a) mixed messages regarding the value of collaborative research and publishing, (b) increasing awareness that different kinds of “impact” are given different currency within the institution (e.g., growing reliance on impact factors and a push towards international publications, perhaps at the expense of valuing contributions to local, community, and governmental agencies), and (c) negotiating between multi-site ethics clearance procedures.

Is this career path right for me?

Could I envision myself working as an academic? To answer this question, I contemplated both the deterring and alluring aspects of the profession that I discovered from my observations of Rose. I will share some of the drawbacks from my perspective. First, being an academic will mean spending long periods of the day in meetings. I will have to be prepared for the slow pace of institutional decision making and the need for long-range thinking (e.g., visioning exercises, and five-year plans). At times, I may have to struggle to negotiate between my personal “values” and entrenched institutional practices (Winkelman, 2005). I will have to account for the arduous processes involved in writing proposals. While envisioning grand research plans, it will be important to anticipate delays, as I seek out funding sources, respond to Research Ethics Boards’ requests for clarifications, and encounter challenges recruiting participants. Finally, I will face rejection, including declined grant applications and manuscripts for publication, which constitute months of work.

Yet, in my opinion, there are many advantages to an academic career. For instance, the diversity of roles and responsibilities will provide me with ongoing mental stimulation. As Rose states, each day brings with it new challenges and opportunities. Furthermore, I will experience variability and flexibility within my daily work. I can take advantage of extensive opportunities for professional development, including an array of workshops, colloquia, retreats, and institutes. Continuous learning of new concepts and acquisition of new skills is supported. In addition, travel is

inevitable. There are chances to teach at satellite campuses, attend conferences and symposia, guest lecture at other universities, conduct research in diverse geographical regions, and collaborate with others in my field. I believe that it is extremely exciting to be able to network, share current work as mentioned on top10forex.org, and gain inspiration for future projects. Rose indicates that seeing ideas and initiatives that are materializing in other parts of the world will bring a global perspective to my own projects. She says that, "In this profession, if you can dream it up, it becomes possible." I need to wake up every morning and feel passionate about whatever it is that I do. Being a professor will nurture my passions and interests. Finally, I hope to give back. Through research, teaching, and service, professors are able to have a positive impact on others (various communities, students, and the university). Despite the deterrents such as the high-pressured, politically charged climate common in many universities, including my own (e.g., Polster, 2007), I am confident that the inviting aspects of this profession prevail. For those of you such as myself, who are seriously considering an academic career, I will leave you with some useful tips that I acquired over the course of my internship.

Advice for aspiring academics

1. *Know yourself.* Be sure of who you are and what you stand for and be able to articulate this clearly to others (Rose).
2. *Start investigating job opportunities early.* Determine the type of academic position that interests you and identify where such jobs exist. Ask professors to share bulletins, postings, and their insider knowledge regarding available and upcoming positions (Rose).
3. *Come to your interview well prepared.* An academic interview may span two days. It is an intense process that typically includes: meals, meetings, tours, a formal interview with an advisory committee, and a public presentation. Do your homework. If you identify a prospective match, be able to articulate how you envision yourself to fit within the department and the institution. Investigate the research interests of potential colleagues. Show that you are knowledgeable about their work and willing to form partnerships with them. Equip yourself with information about the average starting salaries for similar academic positions in the province. Consider negotiation skills as integral to the contract signing process (Rose). "Use your time on campus to find out whether the position is a good fit; consider this when deciding whether to decline an offer or specify conditions during negotiations

- that would make it an acceptable choice for you” (M. McGinn, personal communication, March 23, 2010).
4. *Actively seek out mentorship.* The first year will be intense (Perlmutter, 2004). “Find a mentor; someone whom you can learn from, collaborate with, and question, in order to get a sense of how everything works” (Rose).
 5. *Develop creative problem-solving skills.* Perlmutter (2004) advises: “Don’t bother your dean with any problem that you can solve for yourself. Don’t ‘vent’ to her: She’s not the therapist in chief. Save direct appeals for the tough issues. And then walk in with a realistic plan for a solution. Let your name on an e-mail announce something important and proactive. Be a solver, not a sobber.
 6. *Be fully committed to each project you undertake.* Put 100 percent into everything that you do (Perlmutter, 2004). Furthermore, never compromise your morals and values (Rose), because character matters (Donnert, 2004).
 7. *Avoid overextending yourself.* Know your limitations (Perlmutter, 2004) and when to say no (Rose).
 8. *Be punctual.* Always arrive on time. Being late leaves a poor impression and means that you will likely miss out on key pieces of information.
 9. *Be flexible.* Write in pencil, as it is easier to erase (Rose). You will find yourself amending appointments and obligations in your ever-changing schedule.
 10. *Be organized.* Develop a good system of organization, and be able to locate things at a moment’s notice (Rose). Find the approach that works best for you (e.g., colour-coded files, labeled binders, hardcover notebooks, accordion style organizers, desktop folders).
 11. *Familiarize yourself with the faculty handbook.* This document is your bible. Know it inside out and always have a copy on hand for quick reference (Rose).
 12. *Research matters.* Compose a clear, specific, and realistic program of research (Perlmutter, 2004). With respect to dissemination, “Be strategic and engage in a three-step process: after conducting research, do a poster session, a paper presentation, and follow up with the publication” (Rose).
 13. *Ensure that your teaching is practical and relevant to students.* Rose advised, “Be explicit in your teaching, think things through and justify what you do.”

14. *Adhere to workload requirements.* Do not neglect or compromise any of the three dimensions of your workload (i.e., teaching, research, or service), as this can be detrimental to your academic career (Rose).
15. *Find balance.* Maintain outlets for relaxation and creativity that extend outside your work (Rose).

Remaining questions

The internship course remains one of the most valuable learning experiences of my graduate education thus far. My weekly observations and one-on-one conversations enabled me to appreciate the complexity of one professor's multiple roles and responsibilities and to understand some of her experiences, anxieties and ambitions as a newer, pre-tenured academic trying to build a solid reputation while making a recognized "contribution" to her field (Ovington, Diamantes, Roby, & Ryan, 2003). I gained awareness of the amount of time she spent attending meetings, responding to e-mails, and conferencing with students. Furthermore, I saw the conflicts that arose for her in trying to balance her teaching, research, and service work. I left this experience with a new-found appreciation for the work that academics do and for the complexities of juggling work roles, their own expectations, the demands of others, institutional politics, pressures, and complicated hierarchies.

I have since moved on to doctoral studies, undeterred from pursuing an academic career. Reflecting back on the internship from this new vantage point, having had opportunities to be more fully engaged in academic life, I continue to contemplate some important questions. For instance, what kinds of spaces and conversations might have been off limits to me during the internship? What did I not see? What was missing from the picture that was painted for me of Rose's academic work life? Why might certain dimensions have been omitted? Did my presence change Rose's behaviour or daily schedule in any way? Moreover, what is missing from my own reconstruction of this experience? How do my recollections coincide with what I observed? In shadowing one professor, I am unable to draw comparisons to others. I wonder how closely her experiences parallel those of other early-career, pre-tenured faculty. Would my early impressions of academic work be quite different if I had shadowed a white, male, tenured faculty member? I have begun to answer some of these questions for myself and examine academic work from multiple perspectives through active participation in university affairs. For me, this has meant: sitting on departmental and institutional committees, becoming involved in broader

disciplinary conversations carried out within special interest groups, engaging in formal and informal mentorship opportunities, and building a program of research around academic identity and role negotiation.

To aspiring academics, I say I hope that you will start to question some of your own assumptions about this diverse profession, as I have begun to do, and that you, too, will critically evaluate multiple sources of information in your quest to determine whether this profession is right for you. Perhaps one day some of our paths will cross, in the bustling hallways of the “ivory tower.”

Christina Skorobohacz is a PhD student in educational studies at Brock University. She is co-investigator on a research project entitled “Faculty Service Workload and Quality of Life”. Her doctoral dissertation will explore the opportunities and challenges of women employee-graduate students as they simultaneously study and work at one university.

Acknowledgements

To “Rose”, the professor I interned with: Thank you for your candour during our many conversations, for your wisdom and sage advice, for your infectious enthusiasm and, most of all, for your willingness to share your personal journey with me. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Alice Schutz and Michelle McGinn for their feedback on a previous draft of this manuscript.

Note

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 35th Annual Conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, on May 26, 2007.

References

Donnert, H. J. (2004). The professorship: Just a job – or a higher calling? *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*, 84(4), 40.

Ovington, J., Diamantes, T., Roby, D., & Ryan, C. (2003). An analysis of prevailing myths regarding tenure and promotion. *Education*, 123(3), 635-637.

Perlmutter, D. D. (2004). When the honeymoon is over [Electronic version]. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50(44), C3.

Polster, C. (2007). The nature and implications of the growing importance of research grants to Canadian universities and academics. *Higher Education*, 53(5), 599-622.

Winkelman, M. A. (2005). Myths and realities for today's college professors; or, et in arcadia ego. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, 5(2), 175-194.